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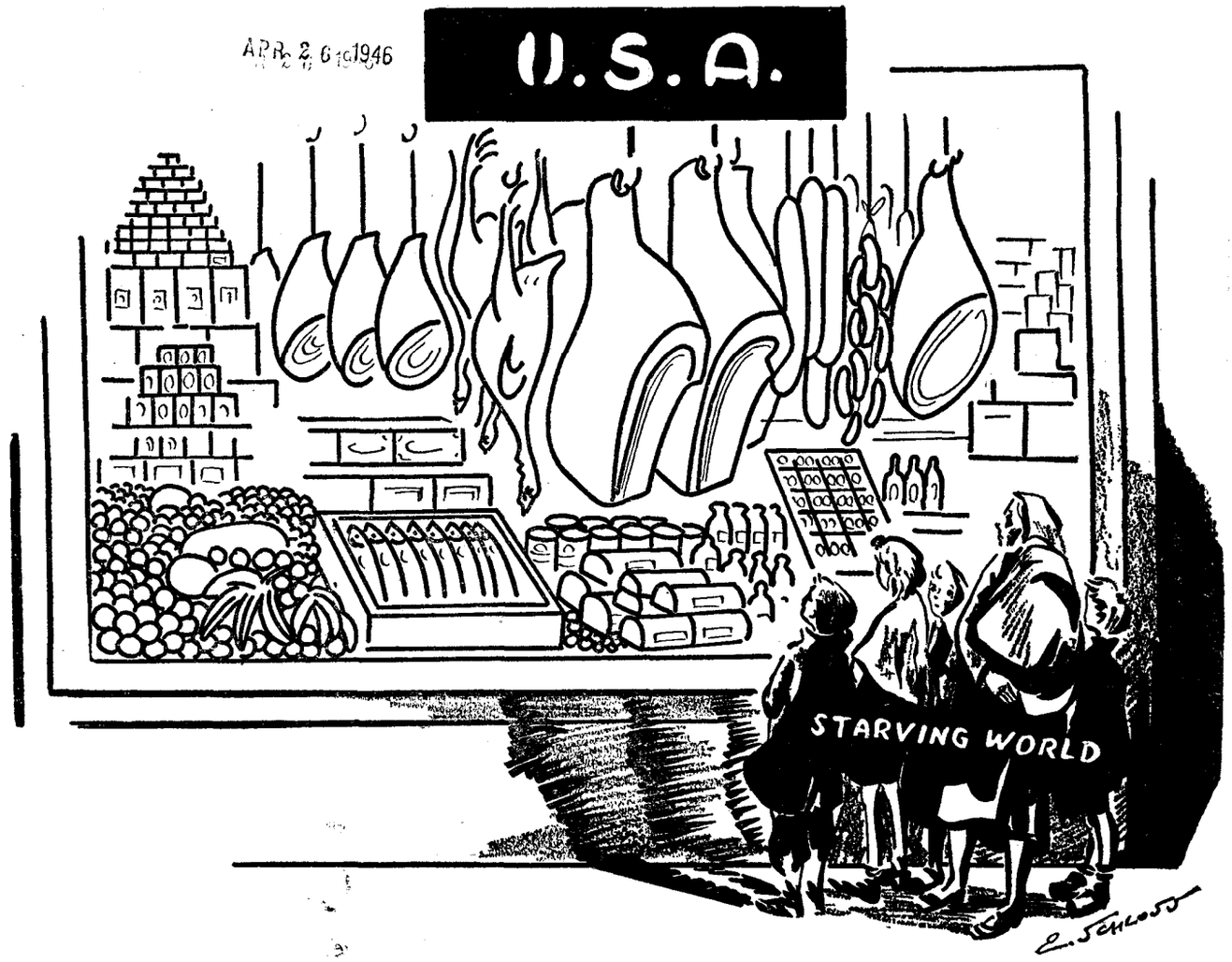

FAMINE:

AMERICA'S DUTY

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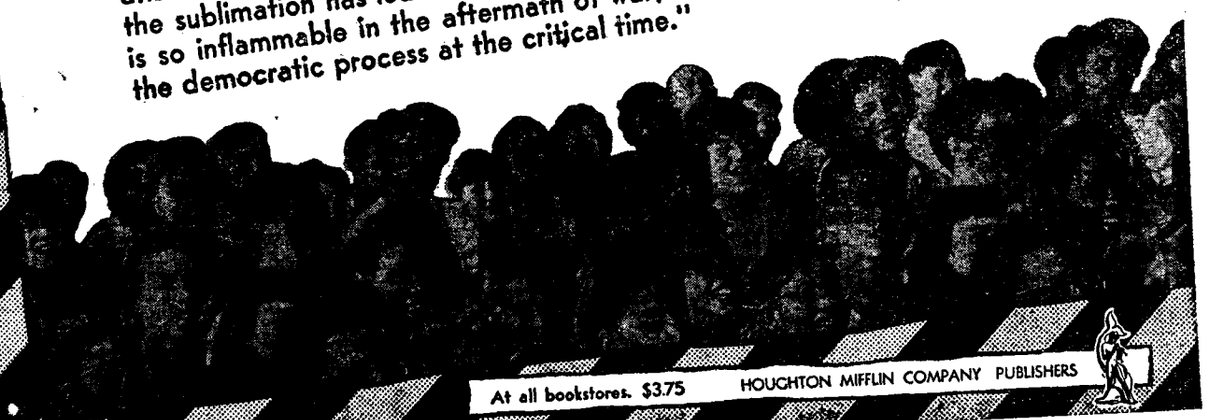

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Opinion

VOL. 114, NO. 17 NEW YORK, MONDAY, APRIL 29, 1946 NUMBER 1639

Famine: America's Duty

BOWING BELATEDLY to the cries of the world's hungry, the United States is moving by half-steps to meet the worsening world food crisis.

Announcement of the reduced rate of flour production and bonus prices to farmers for wheat and corn was made with the flourish usually accorded bold, sweeping plans.

After so many days of deliberation, something far more ambitious could have been expected.

The 25-percent reduction in consumption of wheat, based on 1945 rates of use, is a smaller action than it appears. Right now we are already consuming less bread products than in corresponding months of last year, because of the greater availability of other foods.

The Administration's Food Emergency Committee is on record with an earlier request that Americans eat 40 percent less wheat. Although that request has gone generally unheeded, if it was intended seriously it should be at least as necessary now as it was then. Does the Administration mean we must eat 40 percent or 25 percent less wheat? That difference in figures can mean life or death to millions of men, women and children in Europe and Asia.

In declaring a 30-cents-a-bushel bonus for corn and wheat, the Administration is attempting to make the best of another half-measure. The bonus is a follow-up of the generally unsuccessful deferred-pricing plan to draw grain from the nation's farms. At least it will test whether failure to bring the grain to market is really a question of prices. Many farm leaders maintain that it is not. They say farmers are keeping the grain for cattle feed and for reserves to guard against a bad crop year. If that is true, the bonus plan also is doomed.

In his radio address from Cairo last week, Hoover appeared to admit, as mildly as possible, what UNRRA officials have been saying for some time—that the designated 120 days of emergency will not see the world over the hump about food. The same thought crept into a recent report to the President by the Emergency Food Committee.

Considerably more than half of the people of the world are on short rations. Millions will starve before the next harvests unless food is immediately rushed to them. In the Far East, famine of unprecedented magnitude threatens China and India. The situation is aggravated by the fact that there is a critical shortage of rice and that world demands on wheat and other grains—which must be used as substitutes for rice—are greater than ever before.

REPORTS from the UNRRA China office at Shanghai say that famine has brought an estimated 30 million persons in 19 provinces of China to the point of starvation. UNRRA and the Chinese National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration are rushing foodstuffs to areas of serious food shortage as fast as crippled transportation facilities permit. Despite all efforts, it is feared at least four million persons will not survive famine unless the world food deficit improves almost overnight. Drought, floods and locust plagues have followed in the wake of the invading Japs. In Hunan Province—the "rice bowl" of China—conditions are at the worst. Millions of people are eating grass, roots, the bark of trees and even clay.

In Europe there has been no mass starvation so far among the adult population but it cannot be held off much longer unless supplies increase. Prolonged hunger on a so-called subsistence diet has so weakened men, women and children that they are easy prey to disease and death rates are alarmingly high. In the UNRRA countries people are living on diets of from 1,200 to 1,800 calories a day compared with the 3,300 to 3,500 calories consumed by people in the United States. Reports from Poland say that tuberculosis among children due to undernourishment and exposure is ten times as great as in this country. The children of Europe need milk and eggs, cereal gruels, and fats if their weakened bodies are to resist fatal disease. UNRRA will ship every ounce of food it can get, but even with the combined efforts of the supplying countries, it looks as if there will not be enough and that tens of thousands will die for lack of food.

Bread stocks in four of the countries receiving UNRRA help—Greece, Italy, Poland and Yugoslavia

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—are less than two weeks' supply of a ration, in all cases far below two-thirds of a pound a day (in the case of Italy half a pound a day). It should be remembered that in these countries bread is the main part of the meal. It is supplemented by fats (also in desperately short supply), dried peas or beans, fish and a little sugar.

Many countries which are not receiving UNRRA assistance but are buying their food supplies are urgently in need of bread grains, oils and fats, etc. Even in the United Kingdom the daily average bread consumption is only slightly more than half a pound, although it has greater supplies of other foods than most of the European or Asiatic countries.

UNRRA's minimum requirements of bread grains for the first half of this year amount to 770,000 tons per month. These are needed to supply an average ration of nine ounces a day to Albania, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Italy, Poland, Yugoslavia and China. Beginning in May, UNRRA will also have to provide food for Austria, which has been under the charge of the Allied Control Commission.

Because of the shortage of wheat, UNRRA agreed to accept one-fourth of its wheat needs, or 175,000 tons, in substitute bread grains such as corn, rye, barley and oats. However, shipments of bread grains during the first three months of 1946 have fallen about 550,000 tons below requirements and the future outlook is even worse.

The four big wheat-exporting countries today are the United States, Argentina, Canada and Australia. The Department of Agriculture estimates that on April 1 the United States had a stock of wheat amounting to 375 million bushels, of which slightly more than half was on farms and the rest was non-farm stocks. The total available would be utilized as follows: for

We Must Not Let Them Starve

by F. H. LaGuardia

Director General of United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

There is hunger today in many parts of the world. People are actually dying of hunger. More will die unless they get food. It's UNRRA's job and it's my job to get every bushel of wheat and every pound of fat we can get our hands on to send to those hungry people.

I am sorry to say that in our own country we haven't done enough—not nearly enough. In fact, we have been downright selfish. We are getting more food than any other people in the world but we haven't been at all generous in sharing it with those who are desperately hungry—some of them about to starve. Wheat is being kept on the farms; wheat is being held by the mills; flour is being stored by the bakers—taking advantage of every moment's delay in the issuance of necessary government orders to set aside wheat for export to feed the hungry—something that should have been done long ago.

The American people—the great bulk of the folks like you and me—are insistent on keeping millions of people from dying of hunger. They are on the job. They are humanity's guardians. They are going to watch the farmer, the miller, the baker and the restaurateur. There is no place in our midst for the "belly American."

Our government has been most generous. And I think the American people are going to do something about it. They can do it. We can get thousands of bushels of wheat to feed the hungry if we just buy less bread. The same with all wheat products—cakes, cookies, pies and cereals. Just buy 40 percent less. We have plenty of other things to take their place.

Fats are also necessary. What are they? Let us not get technical. Fats mean what the average American gets in half a dozen different dishes. He doesn't think about it. He doesn't even notice it. One never thinks about it until one doesn't get it. But when there is no meat, no other food supplying fuel for the body, then fats become very important. So use every ounce of your drippings. Buy less fat so that we can send it to the hungry.

Let me ask this question: What would you do if you saw a nice coat of paint being put on to change the color of a nice clean room, and you saw a hungry child, about to die, looking on? If you were asked to judge between the child and the paint job I know what your decision would be. Save the child! Now, dammit, do it! Millions of gallons of food are being used by the paint industry which should go into the stomachs of millions of people who otherwise would lose their lives.

Now about soap. Edible oils are going into soaps these days—oils that would provide nourishment to thousands of underfed little children abroad. The only way to have a clean conscience in the United States today is to use less soap.

I don't like the job that has been given to me. I had to take it because the President of the United States asked me to do so. It was a challenge. I have received wonderful coöperation. I am not kicking. But when millions of lives are at stake, good intentions are not enough. Why am I saying all this? Hell, it is just lost time. *The New Republic* is O. K. The readers of the *New Republic* are all right. Why am I telling them all this? They know it. They are coöperating.

Maybe the *New Republic* can say to the big, powerful press of our country, "Please copy."

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human consumption, 120 million bushels; for seed, 20 million bushels; for feed, 30 million bushels; for carryover (reserves), 150 million bushels; thus leaving available for export during the second quarter of 1946 only 55 million bushels. The United States has publicly announced a target of 225 million bushels to be shipped during the first half of 1946 to other countries and to UNRRA. On present expectations, therefore, there is a deficit of 170 million bushels.

Internal transportation difficulties have reduced shipments of grain from Argentina. However, conditions there are improving, and during the months of April and May Argentina hopes to load 16 ships with grain—about 126,000 tons for UNRRA.

The total quantity of wheat available for export from Canada through the end of July is about 75 million bushels, most of which is now earmarked for the United Kingdom. Reduction of Canada's carryover may make an additional 15 million bushels available for export.

Australia's exports of wheat during the second quarter may amount to 20 million bushels.

The rice situation is bad. For the first quarter of 1946 the Combined Food Board's Rice Committee recommended an allocation to UNRRA of 47,800 tons against requirements for China of 180,000 tons per quarter. UNRRA was able to obtain for shipment to China only 2,938 tons of rice in January and 559 tons in February.

The situation in respect to oils and fats is also serious. During the last half of 1945 UNRRA was able to buy and ship to countries receiving its help only about 23 percent of its requirements for that period. UNRRA's shipments of fats during the first quarter of this year were only about 15 percent of requirements.

The fear is building that autumn of 1946 may see a new great food emergency. Crop failures almost anywhere would be catastrophic, immediately affecting the world's food bin.

By discouraging any talk of rationing, our government has discouraged long-range planning. Our poor results to date are a good indication that the same or similar policies will not meet future needs.

There is general agreement that food rationing, even if immediately authorized, would require four to six months to put into effect. For one thing, the OPA, which would logically handle the rationing, is now fighting for its life. Second, the once-elaborate ration-board system is now down to skeleton size. Other problems involve printing millions of ration books, safety measures to discourage counterfeiting, etc.

Had planning for rationing begun when we "discovered" the food emergency months ago, by now it would have been well on its way into effect. Those costly months are completely lost to us, but it is not yet too late for strong action. *Let us cease the small steps and face the problem. Rationing or some equally drastic action is required.*

Save Price Control!

A majority of the House voted subservience to their master's voice, and it was not your voice, people of America.

THIS REMARK, made by Michigan's Representative Louis C. Rabaut, is the most precise summation of the House's 12-hour nightmare last week in which price control was garroted. The murder was particularly cynical because many of the Representatives who did the dirty job thought they could escape the consequences of public wrath. "We extended the OPA, just like you asked us to, didn't we?" they inquire hopefully and ungrammatically, knowing that the amendments they adopted kill price control dead.

To newsmen watching the slaughter, one startling fact stood out. The coalition of about 170 Republicans and 90 Southern Democrats talked of meat packers, grain processors, auto retailers, mill operators—but not people. Spence, Patman, Monroney, Klein, Baldwin of New York, Hook and a few others tried to remind them that there were consumers as well as paid lobbyists. But the majority declined to listen. They legislated, as Sabath put it, "in the interest of the five percent who have already made exorbitant profits."

Of the 10 amendments tacked on to the measure it is difficult to say which did the worst damage. Which dagger killed Caesar? Taking subsidies off livestock means setting higher meat prices. Meanwhile the pressure for higher ceilings on feed and grains becomes irresistible. This means higher prices for poultry and dairy products, then higher prices all across the board, and finally higher wages. And then the "finally" becomes the "firstly" and the whole process begins all over again, and the word for this is inflation.

Speculation on what happens when subsidies are removed is rendered academic by the other amendments. Among the worst are the Gossett de-control and the Wolcott guaranteed-profit amendments. The former provides that once a month each controlled item shall be examined to determine whether its production in the preceding 12 months equaled or exceeded the production volume during the fiscal year 1941. If this is certified to be the case, the Price Administrator must remove all controls within 10 days. For agricultural products, the certifications to the Price Administrator are to be made by the Secretary of Agriculture, a gen-

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tleman who believes that all farm prices should be raised substantially and at once. For most non-farm items, the certifications that production is up to prewar levels are to be made by the dollar-a-year industrialists who comprise the OPA's industry advisory committees. Basic to the amendment is the assumption that production during the period of July 1, 1940-June 30, 1941, is adequate for present needs, and that once production reaches that volume, scarcities and price pressures will no longer exist. The fact is that production *has* already reached that point for a good half of cost-of-living items. The effect of the amendment will be to remove controls on almost every agricultural and basic industrial commodity on June 30.

The Wolcott amendment provides that price ceilings must be set to yield all cost outlays, plus a reasonable profit, *on every item* controlled, for every man through whose hands an item passes, including producers, processors, wholesalers and retailers. This means that every firm which has traditionally sold 25 percent of its output at a loss because it made a compensating profit on the remaining 75 percent, will have a guaranteed profit on 100 percent of what it sells. It means self-pricing for 85 percent of all firms—pricing set by the seller himself—because less than 15 percent of American companies have cost-accounting systems, product-by-product, which the OPA can work with. Whenever the OPA feels that an item is priced too high it can go to court and sue, of course, but any sort of real enforcement would depend on the OPA's bringing several million—that's right, million—court actions.

What happens to the bill at this point is unpredictable. An effort will certainly be made to induce the Senate to delete the amendments and to prepare a decent measure in conference. If this fails, the President must necessarily veto the abomination he will receive. If he does, and if Congress fails to correct its action, very ugly inflation will be upon us by the end of July or mid-August. In the meantime, there will almost certainly be a sellers' strike, with merchants and producers keeping goods back until after June 30, when they have every expectation of receiving a vastly higher price for every item.

For those who look with justified apprehension at the crisis of inflation that will come unless Congress acts to remedy the crime it has committed, there is one slight piece of silver lining: most of the wreckers will not be returned to the next Congress. Not if the people do their part.

Unions in Politics

The CIO Political Action Committee will be a major factor in this autumn's elections. That the press concedes this to be the situation was amply demonstrated when between 65 and 70 reporters turned out for Sidney Hillman's press conference announcing the PAC's 1946 program.

For the moment, at least, the PAC and Hillman indicated they are more interested in program than candidates. The platform approved by the committee is an all-embracing document which serves to illustrate how far labor has moved from the dear, dead days of simple "bread-and-butter" trade unionism and the limited reward-your-friends concepts of Samuel Gompers.

Significantly, the PAC's program opens and closes with reference to the policies of Franklin Roosevelt. Its foreign-affairs planks and its domestic platform are based upon the New Deal's philosophy and actions.

The preservation of wartime unity of the Big Three, together with consistent international coöperation through the United Nations—the "expression and instrument" of the people's will for peace—are recommended by the PAC in solving such current problems as the control of atomic energy, relations with Spain and Argentina, the relief of starving people in every corner of the globe and the demand of colonial peoples for freedom.

On the home front, the PAC advocates a policy aimed at full employment, adequate housing, continuation of price controls and a well rounded social-welfare and education program. It is outspoken in criticizing the "fascist, subversive movements, destructive of the civil liberties of minority groups in American life" which are organizing attacks on Jews, Catholics, Negroes, Italian Americans and other minorities—attacks conducted everywhere throughout the nation and "even on the floor of Congress."

The Un-American Committee

The House last week voted the Committee on Un-American Activities virtually unlimited powers when it cited for contempt 17 witnesses who defied the Wood-Rankin committee by refusing to open their records to investigators.

The group involved, the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, of New York, means to challenge the committee's power before the Supreme Court, putting the House itself on trial.

This is the second round Rankin has won in the House. The first bout resulted in contempt charges against Dr. Edward K. Barsky, chairman of the refugee group, by a vote of 336 to 4. But there was more opposition and more questions were raised, when the 17 witnesses were cited. Fifty-six members opposed the contempt prosecution, on such legal grounds as the committee's doubtful right to subpoena records before it had proved "un-Americanism," and whether the committee had exceeded its power. Others saw a more dangerous implication, the licensing of the prejudices of the old Dies Committee.

Both cases are now in the hands of U. S. District Attorney Edward M. Curran, to be taken before the grand jury for an indictment. If the group—accused by Rankin of being a Communist-front organization to

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bring Spanish Communists into this country—loses its fight in the courts, the members will be liable to a $1,000 fine, or a year in jail, or both.

Contempt charges against three more persons will be voted on by the House in the near future. They are Richard Morford and Corliss Lamont, of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, Inc., and George Marshall of the National Federation for Constitutional Liberties.

The outcome of these issues will set a precedent on authority of congressional committees, their power to subpoena and punish for contempt those who refuse committee demands, and the extent of a committee's right to operate under a mandate as ill defined as what is "un-American."

Representative J. M. Combs, who used the Un-American Activities Committee as a campaign issue to defeat Martin Dies, was present when the vote on the contempt citation was taken. He did not vote.

News and the State Department

Last week in Washington, the American Society of Newspaper Editors debated angrily for an hour on the controversial issue of State Department broadcasts of American news, and passed a milk-and-water resolution in favor of appointing a committee to study the problem and report to the President. There were several reasons for the failure to take a bold stand. One was the attitude of the Associated Press and the United Press, which refuse to service the State Department, though the AP sells to the Russian Tass Service and the British Reuters and, indirectly, the British BBC. The second was the honest fear by some respected newspapermen—Josephus Daniels is one—that news might be corrupted by the government in the interest of its own policies. In contradiction to this attitude was the recognition by many editors that the true and complete American story must be told to the blacked-out areas of the world and that the State Department must do it unless and until private enterprise takes over. Confronted by these conflicting currents, the newspaper editors were timid. It is to be hoped that their special committee will not share this timidity when it finally reports.

John Maynard Keynes: 1882-1946

America would be a despairing country today if we did not have faith in the ability of democracy to provide full employment and higher living standards through government action. More than to any other man, we owe this faith to John Maynard Keynes, who died in England on Easter Sunday.

Like Franklin Roosevelt, Keynes brought together the widest range of knowledge and enthusiasm with genius in his own pursuit. He was a great reader of medieval literature, a great lover of Byron, a great follower of ballet, a devotee of painting. The Keynes Theatre in Cambridge and his house in Bloomsbury were centers of art and drama in England. Kings College prospered through his financial intuition, and his rooms at Kings were a center to which young men were drawn by his great esteem for them and by his always youthful exhilaration at "riding the crest of the wave." Through all these circles Keynes moved with unforgettable charm, grace and brilliance.

Like Roosevelt Keynes came at the moment in history when he was needed most. In 1934 the world of classical economics, with its idealized society of self-governing laws, and the world of human suffering were

Do Something About It!

Two situations of the utmost importance confront the citizens of this country.

Millions throughout the world are faced with the threat of starvation and Americans are sacrificing less than they can and should.

The House of Representatives has passed a bill which would destroy the effectiveness of the OPA and bring us nearer to disastrous inflation.

Now is the time for American citizens to make themselves heard. We suggest below forms for two appeals to Washington. Send either or both, as a telegram or letter. Also telegraph or write your own Senators. Use your own wording if you prefer. Get additional signatures to your messages, or get your friends and neighbors to take similar action.

THE EDITORS

PRESIDENT TRUMAN,
THE WHITE HOUSE,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE FOOD SITUATION THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE WORLD IS CRITICAL. MILLIONS FACE THE THREAT OF STARVATION. IN THIS DESPERATE EMERGENCY WE ASK YOU TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY STEPS TO MAKE SURE AMERICA DOES EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO HELP. WE PLEDGE OURSELVES AS CITIZENS TO ACCEPT WHATEVER SACRIFICES ARE CALLED FOR.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

BANKING AND CURRENCY COMMITTEE,
U. S. SENATE,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MUST HAVE OPA TO PROTECT THEM FROM INTOLERABLE PRICE INCREASES LEADING TO DISASTROUS INFLATION. WE DEMAND OPA BE CONTINUED FOR A YEAR WITHOUT CRIPPLING AMENDMENTS.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

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perilously far apart. In Britain a conservative government turned its back on suffering in the name of economic theory. In America a liberal government turned its back on economic theory to move on suffering. Both courses held their dangers for democracy. An instinct for progress, a mastery of economic doctrines, a sweep and precision of intellect, a grasp of political problems and an extraordinary power of persuasion were needed by democracy to bridge the worlds of thought and action. In Keynes, these qualities were combined. At the moment of greatest need, he conceived the General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money, and gave direction to the New Deal and to democracy the world over.

His heart was weak. He suffered a severe stroke in Cambridge before the war. Yet he drove himself throughout the war until, at Savannah, he became exhausted beyond his power of recovery. Like Roosevelt, Keynes gave his life in the war.

"The final test," said Mr. Justice Holmes, "is battle in some form. . . . It is one thing to utter a happy phrase from a protected cloister; another to think under fire—to think for action upon which great interests depend."

We hope that Keynes would have welcomed these words as a tribute. We move now, and we will move, in the light of his vision.

Temporizing on Spain

For all the talk of the United Nations as the first step toward a new world of international coöperation, the Security Council debate of the past days has shown clearly that the old "sovereignty" business is still on top, just as it was in the days of the League of Nations. You couldn't listen to delegate after delegate in the debate on Spain without feeling a tightening in your heart because the world has learned so little. There was hardly any visible recognition that the internal government of a country is inextricably bound up with its foreign policy, particularly among fascist states; that, in these days, to try to separate the two is an obvious historical monstrosity.

Was Franco really preparing to send troops across the Pyrenees to attack France? Was he really allowing Nazi scientists to build atom bombs? These are the questions that have come repeatedly from the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands and, above all, Brazil. And if you couldn't answer a flat "yes" to those questions, there was nothing to worry about. What went on inside Spain was not the world's business. Let the Spanish people, presumably with their bare hands, get rid of their tyrants. Let them get rid of Franco without bloodshed, since bloodshed might upset other people. Let them undo peacefully what had been forced upon them with fascist bayonets seven years ago while we looked the other way.

Russia, of course, did not look upon Franco's sovereignty in this same detached and mutually protective way. Russia had been touchy enough about sovereignty when Iran was under debate, but fascist Spain was another matter. To that extent nobody—no matter which side he was on in the Spanish struggle—showed the faintest willingness to sacrifice any of that sacred sovereignty when his own interests were involved.

Already the old cry of "non-intervention" has been sounded. To be sure, Gromyko, for Russia, made all the capital he could of the catastrophic results that the "non-intervention" of the thirties meant to the world. He was not sparing, either of his heavy sarcasm or of taunts, in retelling the history of the League, of the "non-intervention" that enabled Hitler to build a mighty army, that let Mussolini embark on the rape of Ethiopia, and Franco, with fascist help, destroy the Spanish Republic and send Spain shivering down the black road of feudal agrarianism and medieval intellectual life. He had history on his side, but it was a history that met with stony resistance. For, in a world where property rights come above human ones, there is nothing so sacred as rights to govern. There is a brotherhood of rulers—including fascist rulers—that trembles when cracks show anywhere.

Above all, what has been demonstrated time and time again is the profound difference that still exists among the Security Council's members when it comes to evaluating the menace that fascism, as an ideology, means to the world. For Gromyko, Franco Spain was the enemy, an enemy to be destroyed no less ruthlessly than were the legions of Hitler or the Quislings of Eastern Europe. You could feel, even under the tonelessness of his delivery, the faint rumblings of almost personal hatred. The attitude of Sir Alexander Cadogan was that of the restrained clubman speaking of another member, a bit of a bounder, of course, but not too bad when you got to know him. Franco had coöperated quite as well as most of the "other" neutrals in running down Nazi industrialists and war criminals. You could hardly have expected him to have done very much more than he had. Where, really, was the danger?

It is in that difference of approach toward fascism as an ideology, as a kind of ace still up the sleeve of some of the world's ruling groups, that you catch a glimpse of the hidden outlines of the bitterness that has marked the political quarreling over Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria. . . . It isn't the whole story, of course, but it is part of the story that festers within the Russians.

Sovereignty, non-intervention, fascism . . . these are words and concepts that increasingly demand common definitions and understandings. Unless some common meeting ground can be created within the Security Council, the present split must grow greater and greater. Already it is a split that demands the utmost statesmanship—particularly in our own State Department—to repair.

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Failure in Iran

THE EFFORTS of journalistic friends of the Administration's foreign policy to find some good in the way we have been handling the Iranian issue before the Security Council ring hollow. That whole policy is wrong and anachronistic. Instead of struggling with Great Britain and Russia, in old imperialistic terms, for a share of Iranian oil, we ought to follow a completely different course. Iranian oil should be put under UN control, and allocated among the nations of the world on a basis of need, with first attention given to the rights and welfare of the Iranians. But even in its own obsolete, imperialistic terms, our policy is a failure.

As a result of our approach to Iran, the United States, instead of pushing Russia out of the Near East, as it had hoped to do, finds itself in danger of being excluded from that whole vast region, which began to attract our attention only a few years ago. The State Department hoped that as one fruit of our policy the United States would obtain an Iranian oil concession. Instead, we now face the possibility not only of failing to get an Iranian oil concession but of eventually losing our great concession in Saudi Arabia. The British face the possibility of losing their Iranian concession by nationalization. We have paved the way for the Russians to become paramount in the Near East. Our policy has proved a colossal failure.

Our policy toward Iran as it has developed almost since the moment President Roosevelt left the Teheran Conference in December, 1943, amounts to a summary of what not to do if we intend to get anywhere in world affairs without resort to war. Mirages and phantasms have lured us to defeat. We thought that Prime Minister Gavam would hold off the Russians for us. He did not. We thought that Ambassador Ala would remain true to us. He did not. We thought the intransigent opposition of the Shah to the Russians would strengthen us. It did not. We thought that the masses of Iranians were so benighted that they could not be a factor in political decisions. They were a factor.

The message of materialistic revolution and economic improvement for the masses carried by the Marxian past of the Russians is attractive to poverty-stricken Iranians, however illiterate and however exploited. While the internal problem of Iran lay primarily in the existence of a high percentage of depressed men and women in the population, the United States ensured its own defeat by allying itself with two outstanding representatives of the small cabal that keeps the people depressed—the Shah and Ala. Lesson Number Two is that we can get no justified satisfaction out of denying to Russia what we insist on having for ourselves. In 1944 Russia sought an oil concession from Iran. The United States helped persuade the Shah and the Parliament to pass the famous law which forbade the Iranian government to negotiate about concessions while foreign troops were on Iranian soil. In the same year the United States came to a petroleum agreement with Britain, with the Middle East primarily in mind; the agreement did not recognize that Russia, bordering on the Middle East, has Middle Eastern oil interests. So long as the United States and the United Kingdom had large oil concessions in the Middle East, we could not justly impute ulterior motives to Russia in seeking concessions in the same area. So now what we denied to Russia, Russia has obtained in the form of a tentative oil concession in Azerbaijan. Russia, furthermore, has shown her sympathy toward Iran by supporting the 50-year-old Iranian territorial claim to the island of Bahrein; the government of Iran now not only openly claims the island but has decided to tax the American operators of the Bahrein oil concession. Other Eastern governments friendly to Russia have nationalized oil concessions; the oil fraternity of Britain and the United States would not be surprised if Iran nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Company concession. The development of a movement of masses in Iran would disturb American interests in Saudi Arabia, where our diplomacy emphasizes friendship with a despot, Ibn Saud, whose passing by death if not by revolution is certain. By denying to Russia what we claim for ourselves, we have encouraged the Russians to obtain in their own way what we would not grant them.

The third lesson that we learn from our dealings with Iran is that the Russians are stronger than we think they are. Contempt for Russia has been common in the United States in the highest circles since Germany attacked the USSR in June, 1941. Then the War Department predicted that Germany would triumph in six weeks, or perhaps two months. The officials of the State Department who planned American policy toward Iran, as developed before the Security Council, were confident that if the United States could thrust Russian troops out of Iran, Russia would lose her influence there. Russia agreed to move the troops. But Russian influence in Iran today is far stronger than it was before the agreement was made. The State Department mistakenly thought that it had but two alternatives in its approach to the Security Council: first, to appease Russia; second, to "get tough" with Russia. It chose the second out of a laudable but misguided wish to avoid a modern Munich—misguided because the issue that existed at Munich did not exist in Iran. The hope that the United States will mend its policy is dim at the moment. As the new Ambassador to Iran, the President has chosen George V. Allen, the principal architect of the policy that failed. He has been Deputy Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs in the State Department. He is an incontinent Russia-hater. His job in Teheran will be to bolster the Shah.

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Washington Wire

A Rudderless Ship of State

IF AMERICA had a parliamentary system of government which, unfortunately, it does not, President Truman would have dissolved Congress for its action on either of two votes last week: its emasculation of the OPA or its emasculation of the draft law. This would have meant an immediate election and a decisive mandate from the voters on whether the Ship of State would continue on its Democratic course or would sail off on a new Republican tack.

Lacking this simple mechanism the prospect is that the proud Ship of State will drift becalmed and rudderless for quite a while. The Canadians have the mechanism to resolve such a stalemate as exists in Washington at present, and so do the British. But under our system of divided powers there is not very much we can do. Everybody can thwart everybody else in Washington, but nobody can put through an alternative constructive program.

It is true that there is an election this fall. The trouble is that off-year elections are generally local affairs in which the minority partly normally makes some sort of comeback. The normal expectation would be that the Republicans would gain seats this fall. Up to a month or so ago this was the general expectation in Washington. However, the Republicans have a genius for snatching defeat from the very jaws of victory. Their intellectual state is illustrated by selection of conservative Representative B. Carroll Reece as national chairman. It is rumored that Neanderthal Old Guarders admire Reece because his initials are B. C.

If the GOP does capture the House this fall it will, of course, be in a fancy position to bedevil the Truman Administration even more artistically than it has been doing. On the other hand, if the Democrats win, it will be very surprising if their gains in liberal-labor seats are enough to put an end to the control of the present conservative coalition. These words probably sound gloomy. However, I think they are realistic enough. The American government was consciously designed to balance off President against Congress and to produce strain and conflict if either side took a strong stand. Seen at first hand here, under modern conditions, it often seems like a pretty silly system. It is always fun to bait Congress and demand that it forgo "politics." But actually the problem is not personal, but institutional.

Mr. Wallace is continuing his drive to strengthen party discipline in Congress. Everybody pays lip service to the "two-party system," but when Mr. Wallace proposes that it be given reality by throwing off committees members who do not live up to their party's platform pledges or accept the leadership of their party, he is violently assailed. It seems to be a favorite editorial sport to attack anything Mr. Wallace says, sight unseen. And yet all he is urging is that same idea of party responsibility which Herbert Hoover and Calvin Coolidge formerly urged, without which the Ship of State drifts rudderless, as it is now drifting.

Under the parliamentary system party discipline is pretty much automatic, because the Executive can dissolve the legislature. Since we lack that basic control, Mr. Wallace, like many others before him, seeks a substitute. There is patronage, of course, but that is used up in the "honeymoon period." There is the voters' power to pick members by personal record and not according to party label. Theoretically that is ideal, but it's very hard in large constituencies. I don't know what the answer is. Without some institutional recognition it's hard to see how parties can be disciplined. The LaFollette-Monroney program for "streamlining" Congress proposes one form of recognition, by creating stronger "party committees" in the two Houses. One fact should be realized at any rate—that much of the trouble springs from the Founding Fathers' fear of political parties. They set up a governmental system in which they hoped to avoid them. We have got over that fear, just as we have got over the fear of direct election of Presidents. We have pretty much scrapped the Constitution's preposterous Electoral College in the latter case, but we still haven't worked out an institutional method of disciplining party members. That's why the United States seems headed toward a grand inflationary boom right now.

The National Citizens' Political Action Committee has culled these comments from Congress. Can you guess who made them? Answers at bottom of page.[1]

1. Who is there in this chamber that does not know that in the world grown as small as this, Russian communism and free America cannot long abide side by side with peace on this planet?

2. This call for more clothing, more food and more medicine [for UNRRA] comes from . . . chiselers . . . gangsters and . . . racketeers.

3. This full-employment bill is a wolf in sheep's clothing . . . the right to a job is a communistic doctrine.

4. Price controls are destructive to initiative. . . . They have no place in America.

5. The quicker the politicians of the nation realize that this country will not survive unless we have white supremacy, the better off we will be.

6. We can go too far in trying to create full employment . . . Too many jobs created will be a detriment to, rather than good for, our people and our government.

7. Some Catholics in this country are lined up with some rabbis trying to bring about racial equality for the niggers.

8. The internationalists crowded us into this war.

Notes.—The stock market hit a 15-year high the day after the House ripped through the OPA, reflecting inflationary prospects. . . . Probably nobody but Senator Langer would have used an account of the Crucifixion, last week, as a means of killing time in a filibuster against the British loan. . . . The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* has just published the Lilienthal report on atomic-energy control as a supplement; the New York *Times* failed to publish it.

Washington T. R. B.

[1] 1. Rep. E. E. Cox (D, Ga.). 2. Rep. A. E. O'Konski (R, Wis.). 3. Rep. R. O. Woodruff (R, Mich.). 4. Rep. P. W. Shafer (R, Mich.). 5. Sen. A. J. Ellender (D, La.). 6. Rep. R. F. Rich (R, Pa.). 7. Sen. T. G. Bilbo (D, Miss.). 8. Rep. C. E. Hoffman (R, Mich.).

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Political Roundup

Ferment in the Deep South

SOUTHERN DEMOCRATS are on the rampage. The cries of anguish which they have been accustomed to reserve for the outrages the CIO-Political Action Committee is supposed to commit upon them from time to time are now directed at their own Democratic National Committee.

The immediate reason they give for trying to overthrow National Chairman Hannegan and all his works is a mailing-room error which sent a committee letter, intended for county chairmen in congressional districts now represented by Republican incumbents, to county chairmen in Democratic districts as well. The letters called on the chairmen to get busy and find a Democratic candidate for this year's election who believes in the Roosevelt-Truman New Deal program. Many sensitive Republocrats smarted under this unintended attack on their anti-Administration records, and forced the calling of a party caucus to discuss what should be done about this insult to them.

The caucus got under way shortly before midnight, April 17, after the disastrous evening session on price-control extension. Nerves were frayed, tempers on edge, and Southerners present far outnumbered Democrats from other sections. The result: appointment of a "liaison committee" to work with the National Committee, stacked with Southerners like Eugene Cox, presumably to watch the Hannegan organization and make sure no other slurs on their party regularity are allowed to come out of headquarters. To have their liberalism challenged by the CIO is one thing. To have their lack of party regularity exposed by the Democratic National Committee is quite another, the Southerners know.

The April 17 caucus was a first move to intimidate the committee enough to keep it quiet until after the Republocrats have come safely through their primaries, equivalent to election for them. The Republocrats are jubilant now over this, to them, major victory. But more Northern Democrats see more clearly today than they ever have that to stay in power, the party must continue to liberalize itself, which means cleaning up its Southern wing. There is a chorus of this kind of talk on Capitol Hill.

So Democratic eyes, usually unconcerned with Southern state primaries, are trained on Dixie this year.

Georgia. – Augusta, Georgia, is the center of one of the most traditionally conservative areas in the Deep South. For twenty years Richmond County has been under the "Tammany Hall" rule of the Cracker Party, a key part of Eugene Talmadge's White Supremacy organization. Through its boss, Roy Harris, speaker of the state legislature, the "Crackers" have had real weight in state politics. Harris is given credit for defeating the proposed amendment to permit progressive Governor Ellis Arnall to succeed himself and lately has been spearheading the effort to hold a special session of the legislature to repeal all primary laws as a way of evading the recent Supreme Court decision outlawing the white primary.

Last week, in the first primary since the Court ruling, Roy Harris and the Cracker Party were repudiated in one of the largest turnouts of voters in Augusta's history—more than 20,000 persons voting as compared to a normal vote of less than 10,000. The victor was William S. Morris. Harris staked his political future on a clear-cut and open platform of "white supremacy." Negroes voted in Augusta last week, some 1,500 of them. But the Crackers would have been defeated by the white vote alone. Both Harris and the Georgia liberals agree that the basic issue was that of Negro participation in government. And the outcome makes it clear that a majority of the white voters in this citadel of the "Old South" are willing to face up to the future.

There was another encouraging development in Georgia last week. James V. Carmichael, young Marietta lawyer and former member of the state legislature, has entered the gubernatorial race. His record includes campaign speeches for Governor Arnall's policies and against those of Talmadge. As a legislator, he was a strong advocate of better health, education and welfare measures. He is generally believed to be the Governor's choice.

Texas. – In Fort Worth, as in many other cities, trade-union political-action directors went out on picket lines to urge striking workers to pay their poll taxes and register to vote this year. Results in Fort Worth were good enough to constitute a main reason for the withdrawal of Representative Fritz Lanham from the '46 race. More than 15,000 Negro workers in his district are reported to be registered, for one thing. Dr. Edwin Elliott, former professor at Texas Christian University, is the leading liberal contender for this seat so far.

Republicans. – The Republicans know that their chance to win in 1948 depends on whether or not they win the key states of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and perhaps California in 1946. They will concentrate their forces and their money at those points. Keep your eyes on those states for a real clue to '48.

Ohio. – Marvin Harrison, Democratic candidate for Governor, is using a tag for his opponent which seems destined to stick. He always refers to him as John C.-for-Claghorn Bricker.

Connecticut. – Democratic Town Chairmen have been receiving unsigned letters saying what a fine Governor Chester Bowles would make and urging the chairmen to support him. Meanwhile there are signs that previous Connecticut deals for '46 may be breaking up. Advisers to Clare Booth Luce now say that Governor Raymond Baldwin will lay aside his ambitions to go to the Senate in favor of Mrs. Luce's candidacy for that office, and will content himself with running for Governor again.

Notes. – Representative Chase Going Woodhouse denies having made the statement attributed to her in this column a fortnight ago to the effect that Irish-Catholics have too much influence in Connecticut politics. Mrs. Woodhouse says that such a view is inconsistent with her long record of opposition to racial or religious intolerance.

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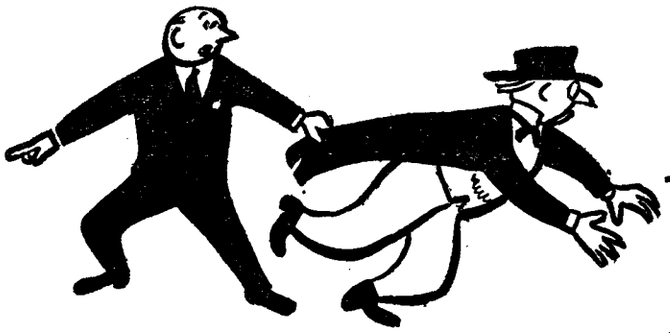
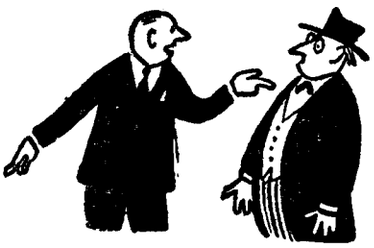


CATCH YOUR

Make Him Face Our Unfinished Business

The House of Representatives is now in recess for Easter. Most members are in their home districts this week. This will be the last chance constituents will have to talk to most of them about pending legislation before the end of this session of Congress. It is essential to make the most of it, to force action on the important legislation still waiting attention.

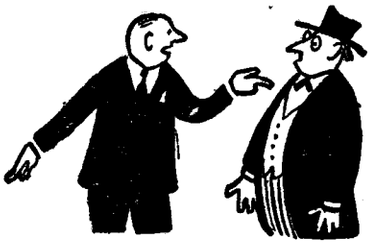
Visit your Representative while he is home. Take your neighbors and friends with you and ask him about such items as these.



IS HE doing all he can to build homes for veterans?

Tell him to support the Senate version of the Patman bill, with subsidies for building materials and government guarantees to manufacturers of prefabricated houses.

Ask his pledge to vote for the Wagner-Ellender-Taft long-range housing program providing for slum clearance and community-housing developments.

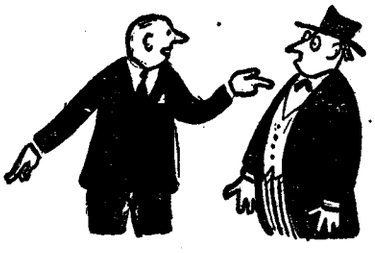


HAS HE done his part to help hold the price line?

Ask your Representative how he voted on the crippling amendments that were tacked onto the price-control bill in the House. It is impossible to tell by his recorded votes alone. Did he vote to extend price control for another year? Ask him to stand against special amendments when the price-control bill goes to the conference committee of the two Houses.

HAS HE stood with those who have fought starvation wages?

Does he favor a minimum-wage bill which will raise the minimum wage under the Fair Labor Standards Act to 65 cents an hour, then 70 cents, and finally to 75 cents within two years, with coverage extended to seamen, food-processing workers and workers in commerce and transportation? Will he fight to remove the Russell Amendment to the bill, added in the Senate, which would include farm-labor costs in computing parity, drastically increasing the whole cost of living to everyone?



IS HE working and will he continue to work, to keep the peace?

Ask your Representative to see to it that the May-Johnson bill is not reported out of the House Rules Committee, where it now rests. This bill would place control of atomic energy in the hands of the military and a board of dollar-a-year corporation men. Military

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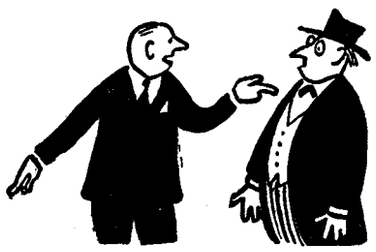
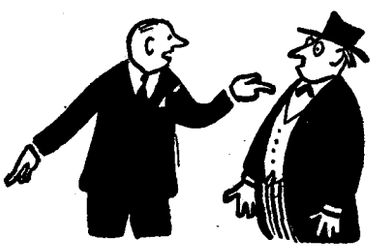
CONGRESSMAN WHILE HE'S HOME!

control of this greatest power would stifle its development for civilian use and force us into an atomic-armaments race to maintain our superiority. Urge your Representative to support the principle of civilian control and development for construction purposes, domestically, and the principles of the Acheson Report for international control of atomic energy as a military weapon.

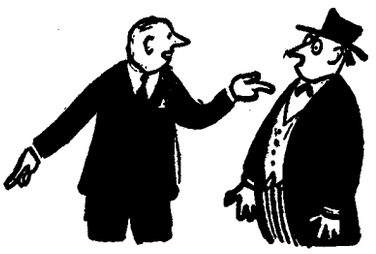


HAS HE faced the pressing problem of our unmet health needs?

Be certain he is familiar with, and in favor of, the national health bill on which hearings are now being held by the Senate Committee on Education and Labor. Remind him of the need for new hospitals and clinics in your district and urge him to push for quick action on the hospital-construction bill which has passed the Senate and has had full hearings in the House Subcommittee on Public Health.

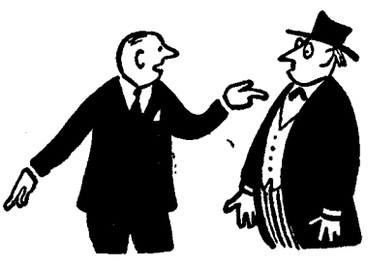


IS HE following the hearings on amendments to extend the Social Security Act? Is he for the Wagner-Murray-Dingell bill to bring the unsheltered millions under the social-security umbrella? Is he in favor of increased security for old age, for widows' and orphans' pensions and health insurance? Will he fight for Senate action to follow House approval of the bill? Can he withstand the insurance and medical lobbies which put profits before the public welfare?



IS HE zealous in guarding our civil liberties, now seriously endangered?

Ask your Representative if he has signed the discharge petitions required to bring to the floor the bill for a Permanent Fair Employment Practice Commission, and the bill to abolish the Wood-Rankin Committee on Un-American Activities. If not, he should add his signature to petitions numbered 4 and 12 immediately upon his return to Washington.



Ask him these questions while he is home.

Then let your voice follow him to Washington in frequent letters or wires. This is the best way to push through our important legislation.

Another thing you can do—

Come to, or see that you are represented at, the Conference on Unfinished Business in Washington, May 1-2, sponsored by 12 national organizations. Write to the Secretary of the Conference at 402 Sixth Street, NW, Washington, D. C., and plan to join other citizens from all over the country in seeing that Congress gets to work on our unfinished business without further delay.

Tell your Representative to keep his eye on this unfinished-business conference to find out what the people of the country really want him to do.

If you cannot come to Washington for the conference, organize a meeting on May 1-2, or close to that time. Save these pages for your agenda.

Let's get the nation's business done.

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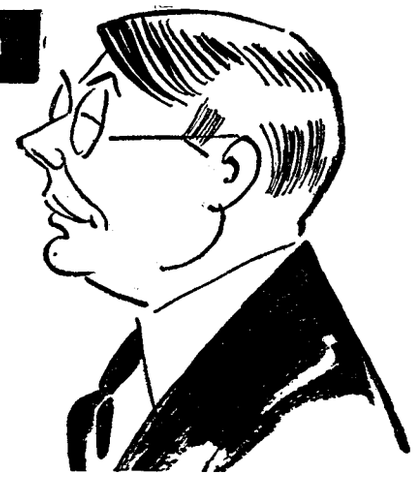
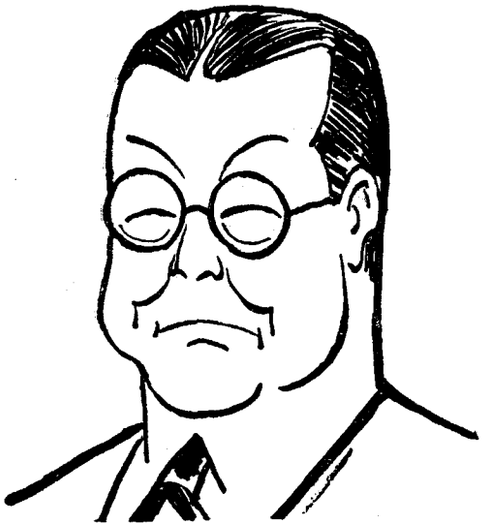
YEOMEN OF THE PEACE by Derso and Kelen

Text by
Denis Plimmer

Dr. Hafez Afifi Pasha, Egyptian delegate and current President of the Security Council: Afifi, anxious to please, handles his gavel as if it might explode. As President, he seems inexperienced and is hampered by a reedy voice which sometimes fails even to reach the mike a few inches away. . . . During speeches, he dons dark glasses, slumps, is sometimes unready when speakers stop abruptly. . . .



Arkady A. Sobolev, Assistant Secretary General in Charge of Security Council Affairs: Ageless, expressionless, round-faced, he takes no sides in Council debates, merely gives technical advice. . . . Like others in Trygve Lie's secretariat, he is no nationalist but a world citizen. When fellow-Russian Gromyko deserted the Council, Sobolev didn't even glance up from his papers. . . . Press consensus: little known but greatly respected. . . .



Dr. Liang Yuen-li, chairman of the Committee of Experts: Sardonic, youngish, he and his committee unsnarl the Council's legal tangles. . . . Almost barrel-shaped, Liang resembles one who wrestles with men, not laws . . . his testimony is authoritative, sometimes touched with impish humor. . . .

Henri Laugier, Assistant Secretary General in Charge of Social Affairs: This French intellectual, his well cut clothes in elegant disarray, banters sotto voce *with neighboring officials. . . . Across the Chamber, you recognize his unruly topknot . . . closer you note a delicate tracery of wrinkles around eyes of one who laughs often. . . .*

Benjamin A. Cohen, Assistant Secretary General in Charge of Public Information: The long-faced, amiable Chilean of Russian parentage moves restlessly about the Council Chamber. . . . An ex-reporter, he loves the Fourth Estate and his job of serving it. . . . Black-haired, he jokes in softly accented English, a kindly Mephisto. . . .

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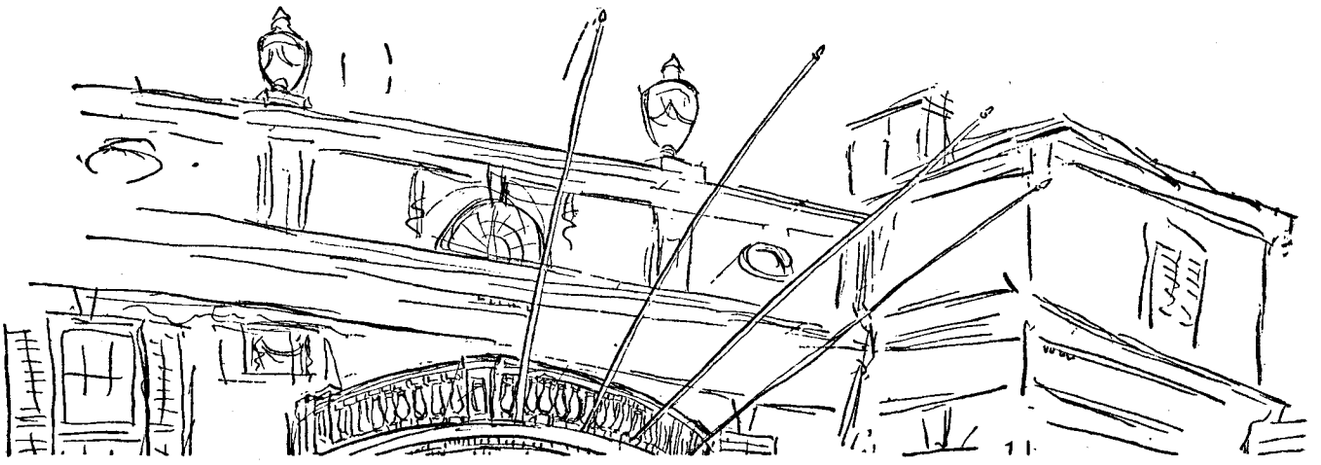

Hyde Park: Moment in History

by Ralph G. Martin

The people kept crowding into the museum, filtering into Franklin D. Roosevelt's study, standing quietly behind the iron rail, staring at the things that used to be his: the shelves of books, the long desk, the pictures of old ships, the small-looking wheelchair in the corner.

A mother and her young son came in and the mother was explaining that this study belonged to President Roosevelt, who died last year. The little boy looked quickly around the room, his eyes lighting on the five small framed pictures of Fala.

"Is that his dog, mama?"

His mother nodded.

"Did his dog die, too?"

THEY WERE MOSTLY his neighbors, the people from Kingston and Poughkeepsie and the small towns across the river. The big-city people were working and couldn't come. The others lived too far away.

Somebody estimated the crowd at 5,000, but that wasn't right. There were millions there. The corporal sitting on a bench in the Champs Elysées, staring at the headline, repeating in a dull monotone, "I can't believe it . . . . I just can't believe it"; the tiny living skeleton, who used to be a professor of languages in Czechoslovakia, walking around Buchenwald, saying, "I am not a religious man, but every morning I say God bless President Roosevelt"; the scabby, skinny, barefoot Italian kid crying real tears and bawling, "Roosevelt morte"; the old Negro watching the funeral train go by, rubbing the head of his small grandson, muttering, "I wish you were old enough to understand what you're seein'. You're seein' the funeral train of the greatest man who ever lived."

They were all there. . . .

"He called me Arthur," said Arthur Prettyman, who used to be Roosevelt's valet. "He was just about the most cheerful man you ever met in your life. I guess maybe he figured that there was no sense making everybody else feel bad, just because he had so many headaches."

Inside the high hedges, the photographers were lined up, waiting impatiently for President Truman and Mrs. Roosevelt to come and lay the wreath. From the way they talked, you could tell that for most of them this was just another job. But if you searched the faces you found the few who were deeply stirred. Like the short, thin man who kept staring at the grave for a long time, then snapped a picture, then stared some more and snapped another picture.

The photographer next to him kidded him about that, "Hey, Mac, what are you wasting film for? No-

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body's around yet." The short, thin man blushed a little, said nothing.

The pretty young woman was telling how the President had known her since she was eight years old, how she had ridden in his pony cart and swum with him in the swimming pool.

"And when it rained, all us kids would scoot to that playroom up there," she said, pointing to a window on the second floor, "and he'd come around and make sure we all had some loganberry drink."

Her eyes grew warm. "I'll never forget that night on the porch when he called me over and said, 'Mag, come over and have your picture taken with your grandfather.' And the next day the picture was in all the papers. That was the night he was nominated President for the last time."

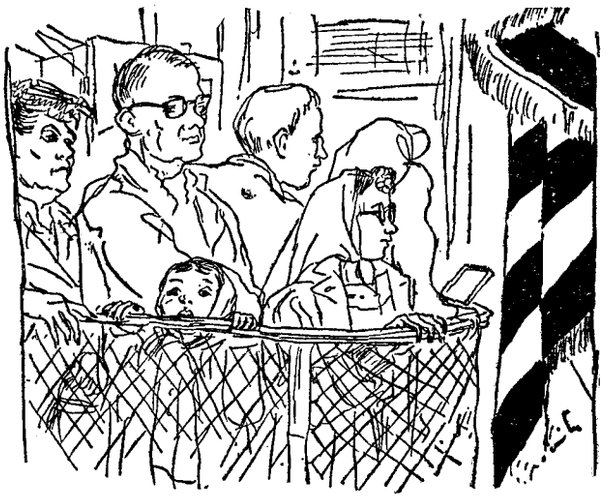
Even the kids who had noisily climbed up on the big trees in the lawn, even they were hushed when Mrs. Roosevelt started speaking.

"It was the people—all the people of this country and of the world—whom my husband loved. He would want them to enjoy the rest and peace at Hyde Park just as he did all the days of his life."

She was still standing straight and tall when she finished, the sun shining flecks of light on her smiling face, and everybody who was seated stood up to applaud.

Secretary of the Interior Krug was the next speaker, and the words he said were not pat words that came out smoothly. They were from deep inside and you could hear his voice shake and see the paper tremble in his hands. Then President Truman, looking grayer and more tired than his pictures, saying, "We shall not soon see his like again." And when he said that, his lips tightened the same way they had tightened when he had stared at the grave.

After the speech, some of the bobby-soxers spotted Frank Sinatra at the edge of the porch and they let out with some wailing and screeching. One of the women said what a shame it was that these silly girls were upsetting the sanctity of the occasion. But some-



how you felt that Franklin D. Roosevelt would have laughed at that.

The short man with the strange accent said that he had just arrived in this country, that he had never been in America before.

"There couldn't be a more fitting beginning for me than this, could there?"

When the speakers had finished, the people lined up along the hedges to see his grave. There was no priority list of who stood first. It was simply a line of people who loved him, all kinds of people. Marian Anderson, an old couple carrying a big basket of flowers, Léon Blum of France, Robert Sherwood, three solemn school kids, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Lehman, a young girl drying her eyes—a long, long line.

The hats came off, the cigarettes were stepped on, the whispers were cut. And then, directly in front of the flower-covered grave, the momentary pause, the bowing of heads.

Standing at the museum steps, the curator told the story of the building's first dedication. There had been a crowd of reporters and photographers, and Roosevelt stood on these steps and spoke without notes, telling how much all this meant to him, how many of his closest memories were inside that building.

"Right after he finished," said the curator, "there was a second's silence and then this newsreel photographer blurted out that he'd like Mr. Roosevelt to repeat the speech because he hadn't caught all of it. And Roosevelt just looked at the man and you could see the hurt expression on his face when he said, 'Don't you understand . . . that's something you can't repeat. . . .'"

Most of the people were wandering around, staring at the Arabian jewels and the tapestries sent from the Dalai Lama of Tibet and the Kiksadi totem pole and the golf trophies he won at Campobello in 1895 and the largest ice boat ever built, which belonged to his uncle.

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But it was quiet inside his library. There were all kinds of books, from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, first Italian edition, 1872, to *An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experiences of Karsish, the Arab Browning* (in Braille).

There was a special section of books on Roosevelt, and in some he had scribbled comments. In a book entitled *Country Squire in the White House*, FDR had noted, "122 pages of rather dull fiction." There was also an enclosed clip from a *PM* book review which started out, "It seems to be a rule that writers who set out to debunk Roosevelt end up by debunking themselves."

Then, in the book *Hell-Bent for Election*, there was a yellowed clipping from the New York *Times*, dated March 5, 1936, which had the headline, "Republicans Buy 200,000 Warburg Books in Country-wide Attack on New Deal."

Close by was a small, thin book entitled *Acres Fit and Unfit: State Planning Land Use for Industry and Agriculture*, by Franklin D. Roosevelt, Governor of New York. Underlined right at the beginning were the words, "to see that plans become realities."

There was also a special section of Churchill's books, one of which was inscribed to "FDR from WSC, 'A fresh egg from a faithful hen.'"

On his desk there was a little list of book titles, and scribbled among them was, "'How to Make History Dates Stick.' Harpers. December." There was also a crumpled, almost empty, pack of Camels in the cigarette box and a Christmas card which read, "May God keep you well, for we all need you so much."

Inside the Hyde Park house, the butler was showing the room in which the President was born, the view he loved, the special elevator that carried him upstairs, his first picture, with long blond hair, the closet where you could see his famous cape and crutches.

"The last thing he told me was about this rug," said the butler. "He was undecided whether he wanted to take it to Warm Springs with him and he said he'd write and let me know. . . ."

Rise of the Loco-Focos

by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.

The shadow of industrialism divided Jackson (as it divides present-day liberals) from Thomas Jefferson, the great prophet of American democracy. Where Jefferson feared and mistrusted the propertyless working classes, Jackson recognized them as a great source of support in his fight against the pretensions to political power of the business community. Leading Jacksonians in the states backed the frail trade-union organizations; both party bosses and intellectuals (like Bancroft and Gilpin, Bryant and Leggett) served as liaison between the labor movement and the government. Then, as recently, a wing of the labor movement suspected the motives of the President's lieutenants and refused to play ball with the state Democratic organization. The New York Loco-Foco Party of 1836 fused with the Whigs in local elections against the Tammany Democrats, just as the American Labor Party in New York was to do a century later. The alliance between the federal administration and labor thus did not begin—as some people affect to believe—in 1936 with John L. Lewis' gift to the Democratic war chest. This instalment describes part of its actual beginnings one hundred years earlier.

THE New York *Evening Post* had come far for a paper founded by Alexander Hamilton. When William Coleman, the original editor, died in 1829, it passed into the hands of William Cullen Bryant, a literary man from Massachusetts. As a child Bryant had delighted his Federalist father by writing a poetical satire against Jefferson; but Theodore Sedgwick, a friend of the family, assisted in his political emancipation, and he came to New York in 1826 already a confirmed free trader. There he met James Fenimore Cooper, G. C. Verplanck and Benjamin F. Butler, all ardent Democrats. In the election of 1828 he supported Jackson. By 1830 Edward Everett had to report him regretfully as "poisoned with the gall of Jacksonism."

A man of middle height, thirty-six years old in 1830, Bryant had a large, sallow face, piercing gray eyes and heavy eyebrows, which gave him an almost saturnine cast of countenance, too often verified by his coldness of manner, though intimates sometimes found him chatty and even gay. He worked painfully at a small space, cleared by main force, on a desk piled two feet high with books, pamphlets, political documents, opened letters and forgotten manuscripts, scrawling his editorials on the back of pieces of waste paper and objecting to all proposals for improvement.

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Early in 1829 Bryant hired a literary man-about-town named William Leggett as his assistant. Leggett had been court-martialed out of the Navy in 1825 for a number of offenses, among them insulting his commanding officer by quoting abusive verses of Byron. As John Quincy Adams mildly observed of Leggett's conduct at his trial, "The tone and character of his defense, so called . . . consisting of a continual invective upon his commander, ought not to have passed without reprehension and rebuke." Such talents had greater uses in literary criticism. Returning to New York, Leggett founded a clever but unsuccessful literary magazine, and then joined the *Post*. In 1835 Bryant and Leggett were joined by Theodore Sedgwick Jr., the bright twenty-four-year-old son of Bryant's old friend in Stockbridge. Young Sedgwick had gone to George Bancroft's school at Round Hill, from which he was expelled for infractions of discipline, and then to Columbia. After graduation he went abroad for a year to Paris, where he dined with Lafayette and drank with Alexis de Tocqueville, visited with Edward Livingston and James Fenimore Cooper, and completed the more urbane phases of his education.

In 1834, his curiosity about the Old World satisfied, he yearned to live again, as he wrote to his father's friend, Mr. Van Buren, "under those institutions which make us all if not Agrarians or Owenites—at least—Workies." When he went to New York to work in his uncle's law office, he found Leggett, shorthanded with Bryant away in Europe, pleased to accept contributions on this theme in the *Post*. The occasional pithy articles signed by "Veto" became a valuable addition to the *Post's* influence. Sedgwick was an attractive young man. Fanny Kemble was fond of him, and Charles Sumner declared him in 1841 to be "the cleverest and most gentlemanly person I have seen in New York," even if a Democrat.

Sedgwick's unimpassioned manner, the force of his documentation and the good sense of his solutions aroused wide attention; and when these arguments were transmuted by Leggett's flaming pen into editorials for the *Evening Post*, they caused a sensation. Bryant, Leggett and Sedgwick were saved from traveling the conservative path of most free traders by their vivid sense of class conflict. Basic to their use of the laissez-faire arsenal was a perception of what Sedgwick called "the social division of parties"—a division which, he pointed out, had run through our history. The upper classes, distinguished socially by exclusiveness, economically by wealth and politically by mistrust of the people, had always grasped after all the power in the state. Jackson had revived the democratic tradition, and "the '*upper classes*' are now perhaps more universally arrayed against us than they have ever yet been." Leggett characteristically rejoiced in the situation. "It may be said that this open and direct array of one class of the community against the other, is dangerous to the future peace and happiness of our city. . . . Well, so it is. But who has drawn the line? Who has beat the alarm?" "We venture to predict," said Bryant, "that so long as our legislative bodies continue to deal out with unsparing hands, bank charters . . . this feeling of the poor towards the rich will become every day more aggravated."

Near the end of October, 1835, the Democrats of the city, now aroused, met at Tammany Hall to pass on the nominations for the impending election. Preliminary mutterings indicated that the proceedings would be less perfunctory than usual. By six-thirty, a throng of determined men had gathered outside the hall, and when the doors were opened, they rushed in, taking the seats nearest the platform. The atmosphere grew quickly tense, with the conservative Democrats alarmed about their slate, and the radicals waiting impatiently to bring their own list forward.

The organization ticket was finally announced to a chorus of hisses, hoots and catcalls. In the midst of the tumult the committee declared their nominations carried and hastily retired. The crowd roared that Joel Curtis, a veteran of the early Workingmen's Party, be made chairman, raised banners with radical mottoes and booed the Bank Democrats. Alexander Ming Jr., son of the agrarian of a few years back, a printer and officeholder, climbed up on a table and motioned for silence. The hubbub quieted down; but, before he could speak, the gas lights went out, throwing the hall into darkness—an ancient and honorable formula for quelling mutiny at Tammany. This time the insurgents were prepared. Taking from their pockets the new friction matches, popularly known as "locofocos," they lined the platform with fifty lighted candles. The people said, "let there be light," as one orator put it, and there was light. The meeting then named its own candidates and eventually dissolved into a boisterous torchlight procession.

The conservative Democrats stuck to their candidate, Gideon Lee, who won, probably with Whig support. But Charles G. Ferris, the radical nominee, polled over 3,500 votes, and the Locofocos, as they were called, first sarcastically by their enemies, then proudly by themselves, took heart for the future. If Tammany Hall would not heed them, they could always strike out for the balance of power.

Labor was also beginning to organize in the economic field. Rising prices encouraged united action, and a successful carpenters' strike in the spring of 1833 led to the formation of a General Trades Union. By the end of the year, 21 societies and 4,000 workers were marching in a union parade.

Ely Moore of the Typographical Association, first president of the union, was the outstanding leader. A

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sallow, restless man, with keen, nervous eyes and long black hair brushed back from his forehead, well dressed, often carrying a heavy, ivory-headed cane, he enjoyed a tremendous reputation for eloquence. The imminent danger, "which threatens the stability of our government, and the liberty of the people," he told the General Trades Union, "is an undue accumulation and distribution of wealth." How could this be checked? Only "by unity of purpose, and concert of action, on the part of the *producing classes*." If such unity could secure to the laboring men "a fair, certain, and equitable compensation for their toil and skill, we insure a more just and equal distribution of wealth than can ever be effected by statutory law." Trade unions, by promoting a more healthful distribution of property, thus helped preserve the economic foundations of democracy. The situation, Moore insisted, was growing urgent. "As the line of distinction between the employer and employed is *widened*, the condition of the latter inevitably verges toward a state of vassalage . . . hostile to the best interests of the community, as well as to the spirit of our government."

IN 1834 the General Trades Union, encouraged by the flurry of labor organization through the East, issued a call for a national convention. Through five hot August days, thirty earnest men were gathered in New York to found the National Trades Union. This first nationwide labor association was a loose organization without control over local unions, but its meetings brought labor leaders together for a valuable exchange of ideas and coördination of effort. Charles Douglas came down from Boston. John Ferral, William English and Thomas Hogan headed the Philadelphia delegation. Moore was chosen president. The National Trades Union met again in New York in 1835 (with Seth Luther and Theophilus Fisk among those present), and in Philadelphia in 1836. It would disappear in the depression of 1837.

The union movement soon began to split, as the Workingmen's Party had before it, between the friends and enemies of collaboration with the Jacksonians. Ely Moore himself swung to the Jacksonian view, and in 1834 Tammany sent him to Congress, where he became the first labor leader to sit in the House of Representatives. But the movement as a whole stuck to the old question of social status. "Our object in the formation of Trades Unions," the union organ declared in 1836, ". . . was not to create a feeling of enmity against the non-producers; . . . [but] to raise in the estimation of themselves and others, those who are the producers of the necessaries and luxuries of life." When the problem of politics was brought up at the first meeting of the National Trades Union, Charles Douglas expressed the general sentiment in his remark that the workingmen "belonged to no party; they were neither disciples of Jacksonism nor Clayism, Van Burenism nor Websterism, nor any other *ism* but *workeyism*."

But workeyism, even without Jacksonism, was quite bad enough for respectable opinion. The immigrant Francis Lieber, assembling the battery of German scholarship, sought to demonstrate that unions formed "a most oppressive and flagrant, and unrighteous aristocracy." "The rights of *employers* are invaded by these associations," moaned the New York *Review*, with a bathos kept laboriously alive by the National Association of Manufacturers a century later. "They are not permitted to negotiate with their workmen on terms of equality." If this article was not written by Alonzo Potter, soon to be a bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church, then he stole portions of it for his book on *Political Economy*, going on to point out that union leaders were generally atheists and foreigners.

The courts viewed these emotions with deference, and a judicial campaign in 1835 and 1836 checked the union movement. The first case occurred at Geneva, in Ontario County. The journeymen shoemakers of Geneva agreed not to work for any master shoemaker who declined to abide by union rules. When one employer proceeded to hire a journeyman at a wage below union rates, the other journeymen in the shop quit work till the non-union shoemaker was discharged. The strikers were then indicted for criminal conspiracy, their alleged offense lying not in coercion or violence, but simply in refusing to work. When the case reached the state Supreme Court, Mr. Chief Justice Savage's decision completely backed the employer. "If journeymen boot makers," he said, "by extravagant demands for wages, so enhance the price of boots made in *Geneva,* for instance, that boots made elsewhere, in *Auburn,* for example, can be sold cheaper, is not such an act injurious to trade? . . . It is important to the best interests of society that the price of labor be left to regulate itself. . . . Competition is the life of trade."

MEANWHILE a new dispute was brewing in New York City. Late in 1835 the Society of Journeymen Tailors increased its rates, winning recognition of the increase after a brief strike. In January, 1836, their employers combined to roll back the rates to the original level. The tailors promptly struck again. Each side employed its weapons of picketing and black list, and fights between the strikers and the "dungs," as scabs were then called, led to considerable bitterness. When Savage rendered decision in the Geneva case, the employers took the hint and had twenty of the leading tailors arrested for criminal conspiracy. The strike alone constituted the offense in accordance with the Geneva doctrine; incidental violence was irrelevant to the indictment. Judge Edwards modeled his charge to the jury on Savage, and the tailors were convicted.

On the day of sentence Edwards denounced the unions as "of foreign origin, and . . . mainly upheld by

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foreigners," and fined the defendants a total of $1,150. As the tailors advanced to pay the fines, one of the officers of the court said he had been employed for three weeks at ten shillings a day and wanted to give it all to the men. Even the New York *Times*, exasperated by Edwards' reckless accusations, threw back the canard that only aliens were in the union. "It is a low calculation when we estimate that two-thirds of the working men in this city, numbering several thousand, belong to it." Cold with indignation, William Cullen Bryant inscribed in memorable words the case's epitaph:

> They were condemned because they had determined not to work for the wages that were offered them! Can any thing be imagined more abhorrent. . . . If this is not SLAVERY, we have forgotten its definition. Strike the right of associating for the sale of labour from the privileges of a freeman, and you may as well at once bind him to a master. . . . If it be not in the colour of his skin, and in the poor franchise of naming his own terms in a contract for work, what advantage has the labourer of the north over the bondman of the south?

On the evening of June 13 twenty-five thousand people crowded into the Park to protest the sentence. Few could recall so large a public meeting.

THE Military and Civic Hotel was a dingy yellow building, not quite two stories high, on the corner of Broome Street and the Bowery. Many nights in 1836 and 1837 groups of men would descend the two or three steps from the street, pass the bar to the shabby staircase, faintly lit by a dark, japanned lamp, and climb the half story to the meeting room. There, under the low ceiling, the walls smoked up by candle black, with a platform barely large enough for a small table and three or four chairs, the Locofocos gathered.

From the trade-union movement the Locofocos gained three leaders: John Commerford of the Chairmakers and Gilders, an honest and outspoken radical; the red-headed, ambitious and unreliable Levi D. Slamm of the Journeymen Locksmiths; and Robert Townsend Jr. of the House Carpenters. Thus when the courts struck down the unions early in 1836, the Locofocos stood ready to redirect labor energy into political channels and become the receivers of the union movement.

They had already set up an independent organization, which had run Ming for Mayor in the spring elections of 1836, and they had a paper, the *Democrat*, printed by John Windt and edited by Clinton Roosevelt. The great meeting in the Park to protest the conviction of the tailors took up the Locofoco call for a state convention. In September, ninety-three delegates met at Utica, nominating Isaac S. Smith, a veteran of the old Workingmen's Party, for Governor, and Moses Jaques for Lieutenant Governor. The city organization filled out the ticket, combining with the Whigs on several nominations.

The elections showed that the Locofocos had the balance of power. Cambreleng and Ely Moore, the only successful Tammany congressional candidates, both had Locofoco support. Townsend and Roosevelt were sent to the assembly in the deal with the Whigs, and in exchange the Locofocos helped elect one Whig to Congress and another to the state senate, both of whom promptly forgot the anti-monopoly pledges they had signed before election. The Democratic organization thus suffered deep inroads, because it refused to follow the policy of the national administration.

PENNSYLVANIA had to orient its political conflicts about the problems of industrialism nearly to the same extent as Massachusetts and New York. Philadelphia, the home of Nicholas Biddle and the United States Bank, was also the home of America's first city central labor union, in 1827, and of the first Workingmen's Party the next year.

The leading spokesman of the party of 1828-1831 was Stephen Simpson, a political careerist in his early forties, formerly a cashier in Stephen Girard's bank and for many years a journalist. Henry D. Gilpin was another intellectual converted to the Jacksonian cause. A slender man, wearing gold-rimmed spectacles, thirty-two years old in 1833, he was a good lawyer with a cultivated background and literary inclinations. For six years he edited the *Atlantic Souvenir*, an annual, and he was later to become president of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. As government director of the Bank, he learned its character at first hand, becoming profoundly convinced that corporations were the "great question of the time in morals as much as politics."

The boom of 1834-1835 caused the same split in the Pennsylvania Democratic Party as in New York and Massachusetts. The progressive wing favored Henry A. Muhlenberg, the leading radical in the Pennsylvania delegation in Congress, over George Wolf, the conservative Democratic Governor. In Philadelphia the Muhlenberg ticket, supported by the *Pennsylvanian* and by the labor leaders, included William English as nominee for the state senate, and Thomas Hogan, another union man, for the assembly. As in New York and Massachusetts, the progressives were fighting to force their views on the whole state party.

This was the pattern of Locofocoism.

(To be continued)

This is the fifth of ten instalments—30,000 words in all—from The Age of Jackson *(Little, Brown), condensed with the approval of the author, who has added some new material further to point up the many parallels between our own times and those of a century ago.*—THE EDITORS

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The Bandwagon

Throughout much of the debate the measure was attacked, largely from the Republican side, as not being a veterans' bill at all, but one which would aid other house buyers or renters as well. – *From the New York* Times.

RKO's mix-up over the Ferenc Molnar play, "The Lawyer," is now straightened out and the company will film it next summer under the title, "The Biggest Thief in Town." – *From the New York* Times.

Name One

Masses of the people who once could not afford many types of goods on any but a very limited scale now have much higher incomes in relation to price and have savings to spend. The Southern sharecropper now can compete with the New York executive for some of the good things of life. – *From the "newsgram"* Tomorrow.

Pro Patria

Admiral Louis E. Denfeld, chief of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, urged today continuation of selective service to provide an "incentive" for young men to volunteer for the Navy rather than risk induction into the Army. – *From the New York* Herald Tribune.

Total-Peace Department

The play was staged to present the meaning of democracy to the Japanese—at a nominal fee plus 200 percent amusement tax. – *AP dispatch from Tokyo.*

Our readers are invited to contribute to this column; $1 will be paid for each item used. Address Bandwagon, care of the New Republic. *Please enclose the original clipping.* – THE EDITORS

Correspondence

Southern Justice Again

SIR: It is news when an official of Arkansas condemns an "outside" organization for not "interfering" in the affairs of the state.

The Workers' Defense League has been working for a pardon for Tee Davis, Negro tenant farmer serving ten years for shooting at a white sheriff who illegally broke into his home. At the request of Mrs. Davis, the League supplied the money for her to employ a local attorney in an attempt to secure a farm furlough for her husband, pending action on the pardon application. We did this to help quell the old bugaboo of "outside interference" and because that is the way the Davises wanted it, although the League is opposed to the farm-furlough system as a form of peonage which gives the worker no effective means of protest against unjust wages and working conditions.

At the open hearing—an unprecedented procedure—on the furlough application, the secretary of the state parole board condemned the Workers' Defense League for not appearing on Davis' behalf, and the furlough was denied. Either way, Davis loses and white justice triumphs in Arkansas.

Lillian Smith relates the story: "One night, Tee Davis, a black man, refused to open the door of his little shack when a white man kicked the door and yelled at him to open up. Instead Davis, afraid of thieves, picked up his shotgun, aimed it at the bottom of the door and fired. No one was hurt. But the voice ordering him to open the door belonged to a white sheriff, and, though he had no warrant and had not said that he was sheriff, he arrested Tee Davis. The white plantation owners saw to it that the black man was sentenced to ten years in prison."

Local papers report that the files of Governor Ben Laney at Little Rock are several inches thick with correspondence on the Davis case, protesting the conditions in Arkansas, where a black man is imprisoned for defending his home. *New Republic* readers throughout the country should add their letters and wires to the protests.

New York City ROWLAND WATTS, Associate National Secretary, Workers' Defense League

More Than One Way to Vote

SIR: They are counting votes in Argentina. The outcome promises to be unhappy. But the victory for a strident nationalism is far from unanimous. The polls show that. There are other straws in the wind. For example:

Last night, March 15, the popular Smart Theatre was crowded, and the chief attraction of the evening was the actress Luisa Vehil. She made her entrance at 10:30. As the applause died down, suddenly from a corner in the gallery a voice shouted out: "This woman is a Jew and a communist and she cannot appear on the Argentine stage." The shout was followed by the throwing of three small bombs of tar, one of which broke and splashed over her gay dress. The people stood up in excitement. Luisa Vehil stepped to the front of the stage, and in a calm voice said: "I am not a Jew. I am not a communist. I am a Christian. I was born in Uruguay, where I learned to love liberty. I have been trained as an artist in Argentina. As a Christian, I believe that we are all sons of God." The crowd applauded and shouted their approval for ten minutes.

There is more than one way of voting.

Buenos Aires, Argentina HUBERT HERRING

From The New Republic Mail Bag

The Union for Democratic Action, New York City, sends us a copy of a new pamphlet, "Peace—In a Hungry World," which points out the relation between food and the preservation of peace.

We have received a copy of the first issue of *Weltspiegel*, a new liberal magazine published in Vienna, by Austrians, for Austrians, consisting largely of reprints of important articles from the liberal press of the United States and Great Britain.

Fred Tracy of Cleveland, Ohio, points out a typographical error in our editorial, "America and Starvation," in the issue of April 15. The number of people in the world in danger of starvation should have been stated as five million.

The attention of our readers in the New York City area is called to lectures Tuesday afternoon of each week at the Iranian Institute, 9 East Eighty-ninth Street, on various Asiatic questions.

The University of Southern California and the Pacific Coast Council on Intercultural Education announce a jointly sponsored summer workshop on intercultural education from June 24 to August 2, 1946, on the university campus. A number of fellowships and scholarships are available. Applications should be made to Mrs. Hood, School of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles 7, before May 15.

Cyril Clemens, president of the International Mark Twain Society of Webster Groves, Missouri, would appreciate contributions from *New Republic* readers for a collection of Mark Twain anecdotes he is editing.

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TOP SECRET by Ralph Ingersoll is the astounding story of inside Allied High Command politics—a rousing, now-it-can-be-told account of English and American personalities, conflict, and strategy. It reveals Eisenhower's actual role in the war — the behind-the-scenes story of The Battle of the Bulge—Churchill's last bitter correspondence with Roosevelt—the real reason for the Italian front—why Montgomery lost at Arnhem while Bradley won at St. Lô — how a General finished the war "against orders."

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Ralph Ingersoll is a civilian once again—free to tell this story in a way that no correspondent, no Regular Army officer ever could be. Some of his revelations make fascinating footnotes to the headlines. Others will shock a public which was necessarily spoon-fed on sharply censored news. "So this is how it really was," you will say when you finish reading TOP SECRET. "This is it—this is the real story."

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Spring Book Section

Russia

The Williams Avenue Zionist Church (colored)
a thing to hold in the palm of the hand,
your big hand—
the dwarf campanile piled up, improvised,
of blue cinder-blocks, badly aligned
(except for the incentive)
unvarnished,
the cross at the top slapped together
(in this lumber shortage) of sticks from
an old barrel top, I think
—painted white

Russia, idiot of the world, blind idiot
—do you understand me?
This also
I place in your hands . . .

I dream! and my dream is folly. While
armies rush to the encounter
I, alone, dream before the impending
onslaught. And the power in me,
to be crushed out: this paper, forgotten
—not even known ever to have existed,
proclaims the power of my dream . . .

Folly! I call upon folly to save us—
and scandal and disapproval, the restless
angels of the mind—
(I omit
the silly word exile. For from what and
to what land shall I be exiled and talk of
the cardinal bird and the starling
as though they were strange?)
I am
at home in my dream, Russia; and only there,
before the obliterating blow,
that shall flatten everything
and its crazy masonry,
am I at home.
Inspired by my dream I do not call upon
a party to save me, nor a government
of whatever sort.
Rather I descend into
my dream as into a quiet lake
and there, already there, I find
my kinships. Thence I rise by my own
propulsions into a world beyond the moon.

O Russia, Russia! must we begin to call
you the idiot of the world? When
you were a dream the world lived in you
inviolate—

O Russia! Russians! come with me into
my dream and let us be lovers,
connoisseurs, idlers—Come with me
in the spirit of Walt Whitman's earliest
poem, let us loaf at our ease—a moment
at the edge of destruction.

Look through my eyes a moment. I am
a poet, a stupid, uninfluential poet, excluded
from anthologies, with no skill
in polemics—my friends tell me I lack
the intellect. Look,
I once met Mayakovsky. Remember
Mayakovsky? I have a little paper-bound
volume of his in my attic, inscribed by him
in his scrawling hand to our mutual
friendship. He put one foot up
on the table that night at 14th St. when
he read to us—and it sounded
like the outpourings of the Odyssey.
Russians!
let Mayakovsky be my sponsor—he
and his Willie, the Havana street cleaner—
Mayakovsky was a good guy and killed
himself, I suppose, not to embarrass you.

And so I go about.

And now I want to call your attention—
that you may know what keen eyes
I have in my dream—
to Leonardo's Last Supper! a small print
I saw today in a poor kitchen.
Russia!
for the first time in my life, I noticed
this famous picture not because
of the subject matter but because
of the severity and simplicity
of the background! Oh there was
the passion of the scene, of course,
generally. But, particularly,
ignoring the subject, I fell upon
the perpendiculars of the paneled
woodwork standing there, submissive
in exaggerated perspective.

There you have it. It's that background
from which my dreams have sprung. These
I dedicate now to you, now when I am
about to die. I hold back nothing. I lay
my spirit at your feet and say to you—
Here I am, a dreamer. I do not
resist you. Among many others, undistinguished,
of no moment—I am the background
upon which you will build your empire.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

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Notes for a New Literary Controversy

A NEW literary controversy has recently developed in the pages of *New Masses:* it has been occasioned by an article by Albert Maltz, "What Shall We Ask of Writers?" (February 12, 1946). Maltz commented on an earlier article of Isidor Schneider (October 23, 1945) in which Schneider spoke of problems of conscience faced by the left-wing writer. (Needless to say, when left-wing writers and left-wing literature are discussed in *New Masses*, writers critical of Stalin are excluded.) Schneider sees this problem of conscience as resulting from the difficulties writers face in trying to decide whether they should report the immediate event and propagandize journalistically in order to attain immediate objectives or whether they should write in such a way as to give their work more lasting literary significance.

While it is clear that many writers have faced this dilemma, it does not follow that it necessarily becomes a problem of conscience. If the question of choice here becomes a moral problem, it is for other reasons than the formal terms of choice as stated by Schneider and accepted by Maltz. When this question is raised as a moral problem which confuses a writer, the real confusion is and must run deeper than we could assume it to be on the basis of polarizing the alternatives of "propaganda" or "art." The confusion here is more a confusion of values than one of general approach and method, and behind it there is, further, a lack of theoretical and political clarity.

When the writer faces a problem of this kind, he needs to make up his mind. And reaching a sincere decision depends on finding out what he really believes, what he wants in life for himself and for his fellow men. Once he has done that, the question of deciding what to do becomes merely a practical, not a moral, question. Then, the writer needs to see his problem in terms of how he can best achieve what he wants to achieve, how he can best advance his aims and defend and extend the application of his values. No *necessary* polarization need be made between writing journalistically and writing "creatively." The differences in the two kinds of writing flow out of differences in the problems which the writer must meet. The journalist faces the problem of reporting facts as quickly and as immediately as he can and, with this, the subsidiary one of organizing his facts in order to endow them with some significance by interpreting them. The propagandist faces the problem of influencing people by presenting a set of strategic proposals for political action. To do this most effectively, he must have a grasp of political theory and an empirical capacity to know what is going on, as well as the honesty to say, to the best of his ability, what it is. The agitator is, in a political sense, a man whose work is tactical. On the basis of the strategy of the propagandist line, the agitator attempts to arouse people in terms of specific aims and needs which are related to the long-run strategical aims.

None of these functions is the same as that which the literary artist performs. In this context, differences in function are the consequence of differences in problems and in aims. Concerning literature, we can say that it is a means of working out an imaginative trial of the consciousness of man. What theory does in the realm of ideas, we can say that literature does in the realm of what (for purposes of clarity) we will here call the imagination. Serious works of literature explore and represent how man or men do or can live by some value or values, some attitude or attitudes, some condition of life or conditions of life. They seek to recreate for us a sense of how this is done: often, it is not of crucial significance whether the artist shows men as living well or badly. In other words, optimism and pessimism, hope and despair, cannot be demonstrated to be necessarily crucial in determining the value of a work of literature.

A few comments about the question of literature and revolution might clarify this point. Nineteenth-century French literature was, in one way or another, related to and influenced by the French Revolution. This social revolution created the conditions for a new order of society, for a bourgeois rather than a feudal France. It is a commonplace to stress that the creation of new social conditions of life, of a new class rule, does not, ipso facto, cause a complete change in the nature of man. Successful social revolutions effect irreversible historic changes which pose for individuals a whole series of problems and dilemmas; these can be generalized by polarizing the past and the future, the new and the old. What is to be done? What is to be felt? What is to be thought? These questions are sharply driven into the most intimate thoughts of men during and after a period of successful social revolution. At the same time, men cannot escape their past by voting for a resolution to do this. Freud, for instance, has most positively shown us in an evidential way that we cannot change our natures by making a mere decision to do so, by making resolutions and by adopting a new set of formal social values. Living in terms of their own individual past, and influenced in varying degrees by a historic, cultural and social past, the men who live in and after an epoch of successful social revolution will usually feel within themselves that tension which is generated when decisions have to be made, when orientations have to be altered, when emotions, feelings, habits must be readapted so that one can live with less inner friction in terms of a new order of things. In this way, we see something of the structures of these so-called problems of conscience.

Also these remarks should help to suggest to us some of the reasons which account for the striking fact that in post-revolutionary France there were great writers whose work, on the one hand, would have been unthinkable without the Revolution, and which, on the other hand, was motivated by the opposition to the ideas of the Revolution. Nineteenth-century literature in France reveals the tension of Frenchmen living in the post-revolutionary world and seeking to bring their aims, their ideals, their attitudes, their values, their careers—in a sense, the very structure of their personalities—into some kind of harmonious relationship with this new world. It generalizes this tension of the old and the new. Balzac is but one of many writers who illustrate this fact. On the one hand, he believed that the stability of

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society depended on *king*, *church* and *family*: on the other hand, his literary revelations of the way men and women lived in Restoration society does not offer, on an empirical level, real evidence which would substantiate his own formal political aims and beliefs. Furthermore, a monarchist, one of the great figures in the whole tradition of nineteenth-century reactionary French thought, Balzac regarded bourgeois society with a perspective that was not completely within the orbit of bourgeois values. He saw the Restoration present not only from its own standpoint of the past, but also from the added one of the values of the pre-revolutionary past. He did not see bourgeois society solely in terms of its own estimation of itself.

Along with the dual focus in his perspective or orientation, we see not only the formal contradiction of the past and the present, but also a more intimate contradiction in Balzac himself. A genius with a deep empirical grasp, an honest man, he was a profound observer of the life of his times. But what he observed and used in his writing did not help to substantiate his formal views. Since his time no writer has more thoroughly revealed in fiction the human consequences of the bourgeois mechanisms of money. It is particularly in reference to his dramatization of the role of money that Balzac exposed the social realities of bourgeois society so brilliantly. On the basis of his dramatization of money, Balzac offered material which can help to substantiate an anti-bourgeois conclusion: but this material does not, at the same time, support his own anti-bourgeois views. Further, while his formal values were derived from feudal ideology, his psychology was derived from the ideas of individualism. Thus, there is to be seen an additional contradiction in his work. He was impelled to set down in detail the story of human beings with one all-powerful individual passion or emotion. The very intensity of these passionate emotions in Balzac's novels would be unthinkable without the great French Revolution.

When we say, then, that Balzac was a reactionary, was anti-democratic, we must, in order to specify what we really mean, point out and analyze these contradictions. His formal contradictions are an expression of the more personal ones in which the direct and immediate impact of the tension between past and present, old and new, is felt and used in the very formation of his stories. Finally, these contradictions are rendered, as it were, concrete, in the different types of characters who crowd his *Human Comedy*. Thus, a type he most admired, and created in an approving and affirmative manner, is the virtuous wife and mother of the nobility who bears misfortunes with courage and dignity, who does not complain when family fortunes decline because of the new social order, and who often takes positive action to manage and preserve the family patrimony. The contrast between such women and the wives and daughters of the bourgeoisie, for instance, clearly shows the nature of this contradiction in terms of his characterizations.

If one attempts, then, to "justify" Balzac, by pointing out, formally and generally, the nature of the contradictions in his work, one contributes nothing toward clarifying this problem. Further, a concrete analysis of Balzac should throw light on the problems of writers in the present. Many of them have a dual focus on life. Their entire natures are formed in terms of the society in which they live: they want, or they claim to want, a different society. Their tension is one of the past and present as set against a projected conception of the future. But to work out the confusions which are derived from this dual focus, they must pose problems as these appear to them individually. They themselves are trying to live in an inner universe of conflicting values. A formal decision, a resolution, will not eliminate the values of past and present in favor of projected future values. Their task, then, is to meet this problem in terms of the individual context of their feelings, their tensions, their way of seeing life. This problem is, obviously, different from that of deciding whether to be a propagandist or an artist, so-called. In this sense, then, one must say that if writers are to be serious about their problems they must try to make up their minds. One way in which they might do this would be to write out these contradictions in their creative work. In this way, they will explore man's attempt to live by some value or values. However, to revive the old discussions and polemics of the early 1930's, and to do this in the same old formal way, is not truly helpful in clarifying these problems. Just as many of the polemical writings on these questions were so arid, so can we predict that new articles written in the same spirit, concerned with an abstract, a didactic, an utterly formal statement of issues will only produce new aridity. JAMES T. FARRELL

This is the first of two articles on this subject by Mr. Farrell. The second will appear in an early issue. — THE EDITORS

The Poetry of Dylan Thomas

DYLAN THOMAS' status as a poet is now firmly established; informed opinion both in England and in America is unanimous in its agreement that his work is not only valid and important in its own right, but that, by inference, it provides a positive touchstone for current poetic practice and appreciation. We are fortunate indeed, in these days of deterioration, to possess such a touchstone. Dylan Thomas is a primary agent in keeping poetry alive among us, and through poetry, a proper sense of life, of values. Whatever may be said of Thomas' limitations must rest upon recognition of his superb qualities—a powerful and compelling imaginative vision held in delicate equipoise, matched by a subtle intelligence, wit and verbal sensitiveness and informed by passionate feeling. The recent publication, in London, of Thomas' fourth volume of verse, *Deaths and Entrances*, provides the occasion for the following brief survey of his development up to the present.

To the question, what *sort* of a poet is Dylan Thomas, one can best reply that he is first of all a *maker*, that his poems must be apprehended as verbal structures before any attempt is made to torture a series of statements out of them. What Thomas—what any poet—says is precisely what is contained in the exact number and arrangement of words by which he says it. A clear understanding of this obvious truth will prevent a lot of idle talk about "obscurity." Having made this clear, it is possible to pass on to a further definition. Thomas is a poet to whom the overworked epithet "metaphysical" may without unfitness be applied. He is a poet preoccupied, not primarily with

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The Conversation of Prayers

The conversation of prayers about to be said
By the child going to bed and the man on the stairs
Who climbs to his dying love in her high room,
The one not caring to whom in his sleep he will move
And the other full of tears that she will be dead,

Turns in the dark on the sound they know will arise
Into the answering skies from the green ground,
From the man on the stairs and the child by his bed.
The sound about to be said in the two prayers
For the sleep in a safe land and the love who dies

Will be the same grief flying. Whom shall they calm?
Shall the child sleep unharmed or the man be crying?
The conversation of prayers about to be said
Turns on the quick and the dead, and the man on the stairs
Tonight shall find no dying but alive and warm

In the fire of his care his love in the high room.
And the child not caring to whom he climbs his prayer
Shall drown in a grief as deep as his made grave,
And mark the dark-eyed wave, through the eyes of sleep,
Dragging him up the stairs to one who lies dead.

DYLAN THOMAS

From the New Republic, *July 16, 1945*

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human experience as it is commonly apprehended, but with aspects of that experience lifted out of their apparent context and seen in extra-mundane relationship to their absolute, vertical, determining conditions. Central to his work, therefore, is a proto-philosophical, impassioned *questioning* of the ultimates—origins and ends—of existence. The vision which results is not philosophical in the abstract sense, but concrete, imaginative, poetic. The poet is cerebrating, certainly, but in a primordial, mythologizing fashion, dealing, not impersonally with secondary counters of thought, but imaginatively with the primary data of his own particularized existence, in which he is emotionally involved. Therefore the deep seriousness of Thomas' central vision is accompanied by a corresponding intensity of emotion, expressed in the grand, sometimes majestic movement of his powerful and subtle rhythms.

In his poems we have no re-creation (as, *par excellence*, in the early Eliot) of a specific, localized social environment; no projection of separate human figures or dwelling upon particular experiences for their own sake. And this can only be for the reason that the vertical character of Thomas' vision tends to disrelate the components of immediate experiences in their field of local, temporal connectedness, where they are held together in a lateral sequence, in order to draw them into the instantaneous pattern of the poet's perception. His theme is thus that of the human condition itself; not, as I have said, the condition of man in his personal relationships or natural or social environment, nor even, as some have thought, his merely racial and biological origins and ends, but the essential or fundamental "existential" human state, which is also the cosmic state, the condition of being, itself. Taking his stand within concrete, particular existence, Thomas places birth and death at the poles of his vision. His viewpoint is at once individual and universal—"I" is also, and without transition, "man," and man is microcosmic. The individual birth, therefore, abuts immediately upon the cosmic genesis; death, upon cosmic catastrophe. Seen thus absolutely, however, birth and death are instantaneous; time is, equally, timeless; so that human life is mortal and immortal, flesh has its ghostly counterpart; though the relationship of each to each is enigmatic. In fact, all Thomas' best poems are erected from the double vision which is the source of his understanding: their coherence and firm structure result from the "androgynous" mating, the counterpoising in equilibrium, of contraries. Add to all these briefly enumerated factors a quasi-mystical, cabalistic perception of the world itself as of a metaphorical nature, intimately related to the articulation of language, and you have a fairly complete picture of Thomas' mind and method of composition. This brief exposition is conveniently illustrated by a short and simple poem from his third book (references throughout are to English publication)[1]:

Twenty-four years remind the tears of my eyes.
(Bury the dead for fear that they walk to the grave in labor.)
In the groin of the natural doorway I crouched like a tailor
Sewing a shroud for a journey
By the light of the meat-eating sun.
Dressed to die, the sensual strut begun,
With my red veins full of money,
In the final direction of the elementary town
I advance for as long as forever is.

(*The Map of Love*, 1939)

In what sense Thomas may legitimately be termed a religious poet is a question which has been too little considered. For Thomas makes central, and not merely peripheral, use of images and terminology drawn from Christian mythology, history and doctrine. And, of course, his perspectives are themselves those of religious insight. But he is a religious poet writing out of the indeterminate, subspiritual situation of a Hamlet. Accompanying Thomas' imaginative activity—the very activity of course which makes him so indubitably a poet—there is, one cannot fail to remark, a moral or spiritual passivity. In his poems there is no subjective activity beyond the agonized, suffering or exultant, but always passive, acceptance of that which is given by the inexorable nature of existence; the poet is the victim of his experience. In this he is to be sharply distinguished from such poets of religious devotion as Herbert, Vaughan, Traherne, whom superficially he somewhat resembles. Their verse is packed with psychological subtleties, arising from their awareness of choice, of struggle and of meaning in personal life, whereas Thomas' poems are quite lacking in psychological interest. Thomas gains something poetically, perhaps, by his very inclusiveness, his undifferentiating, intoxicated embracing of life and death and the Yeats-like celebration of blind sexual vitality.

The knottiest problem for such a poet as Thomas is that of development. An intense imaginative activity accompanied by a psychological and moral passivity is bound

[1] Thomas' American bibliography consists of the following titles, all published by New Directions: *The World I Breathe* (1939, out of print); *New Poems* (1943); *The Selected Writings of Dylan Thomas* (announced for July, 1946).—THE EDITORS

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eventually to result in a curbing of the growth to maturity and in consequent artistic repetitiveness and stultification. In this connection we may note the marked shift in emphasis from the earlier poems to the later. In the first, speculation and statement predominate:

> In the beginning was the three-pointed star,
> One smile of light across the empty face;
> One bough of bone across the rooting air,
> The substance forked that marrowed the first sun;
> And, burning ciphers on the round of space,
> Heaven and hell mixed as they spun.
> (*Eighteen Poems*, 1934)

Later there appears a more pronounced note of bewilderment and questioning:

> Why east wind chills and south wind cools
> Shall not be known till windwell dries
> And west's no longer drowned
> In winds that bring the fruit and rind
> Of many a hundred falls;
> Why silk is soft and the stone wounds
> The child shall question all his days,
> Why night-time rain and the breast's blood
> Both quench his thirst he'll have a black reply.
> (*Twenty-five Poems*, 1936)

And this is succeeded, in the latest phase, by a positive, exulting note of acceptance and praise:

> In
> The spin
> Of the sun
> In the spuming
> Cyclone of his wing
> For I lost was who am
> Crying at the man drenched throne
> In the first fury of his stream
> And the lightnings of adoration
> Back to black silence melt and mourn
> For I was lost who have come
> To dumbfounding haven
> And the finding one
> And the high noon
> Of his wound
> Blinds my
> Cry.
> (*Deaths and Entrances*, 1946)

This rapt and exalted note, in the latest volume, as it occurs in the celebration of birth, sexuality and death, predominates in the best and most sustained poems—"Vision and Prayer," "Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait," "Ceremony After a Fire Raid," "Holy Spring" and "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London." It expresses, certainly, a development—but a development which takes the form of an accession of *intensity*; that is, it is an introversion and not an expansion. Simultaneously, in the same volume, however, there are unmistakable signs of an effort, prompted no doubt by the poet's recognition of the danger of repetitiveness, toward the lateral extension of scope. The poems are now for the first time entitled instead of numbered, and attached to specific, recognizable occasions. It is significant, then, that the best poems are still precisely those which directly celebrate birth and death: particular, localized births and deaths, indeed, but seen still in unavoidable relation to the absolute perspectives. Yet not all the poems in this latest collection achieve the same high level. "Poem in October," "A Winter's Tale" and "Fern Hill" are three of the poems which, as I have said, mark a new venturing toward the comprehension of specific lateral fields of experience. And in these poems, while the scope is indeed superficially extended, the result, removed from immediate relation to the birth-death polarity, is an unexpected diffusion and prolixity. One is led, furthermore, to wonder to what extent the too simple celebration of childhood, predominantly descriptive and correspondingly devoid of imaginative-metaphysical insight, in the last poem, is permissibly to be termed retrogressive; as indicating, that is, a deliberate avoidance of the complexities (which exist on the active level of moral choice and psychological discrimination) of adult, mature experience.

Faced with a poet of Dylan Thomas' ability, a fitting humility is called for in the critic. Thomas is still developing, and doubtless will do so in accordance with a true poet's fidelity to his own vision. Yet I cannot refrain from recording my strong feeling that authentic development for such a poet as Thomas lies not in a simple, lateral widening of scope, nor of course in a simple intensification of passionate feeling, but in something much more arduous, much more difficult, but also, ultimately, much more rewarding—in a spiritual, moral and intellectual movement toward the clarification and (perhaps, even,) systematization of the primary imaginative-poetical vision, involving struggle, discrimination, choice. This might well involve a bitter period of non-productivity, but if that were endured and overcome, we might yet find that we had in our midst a poet worthy to be classed with Dante, Shakespeare or Milton, and not merely with Hölderlin, Rimbaud or Hart Crane.

D. S. SAVAGE

Will White's Memoirs

The Autobiography of William Allen White. New York: The Macmillan Company. 669 pages. $3.75.

THE ONE SURPRISE in White's autobiography, which for the most part is all aglow with approval and jollity and the romance of being in on big doings, is the violent, almost masochistic self-abuse to which White subjects himself as he examines each phase of his career. He calls himself a snob and a boob and a fat slob. He says that he was an irresponsible journalist, often bordering on venality, and an intellectual fraud. He attributes his early political views, which were reactionary, to ignorance and opportunism, and his later ones, which were conservative, to stodginess and mousiness. He nags himself unmercifully for lacking the courage of his convictions, on the rare occasions when he had any convictions at all. He protests that his instincts were generally liberal, but adds that this fact merely compounds all his political felonies. Even when he took his flyer with the Progressives, he was too chicken-hearted for an open break with his friend Taft. He was a Wilsonian, with reservations in the field of strategy, but he just coudn't help going along with Harding. At one

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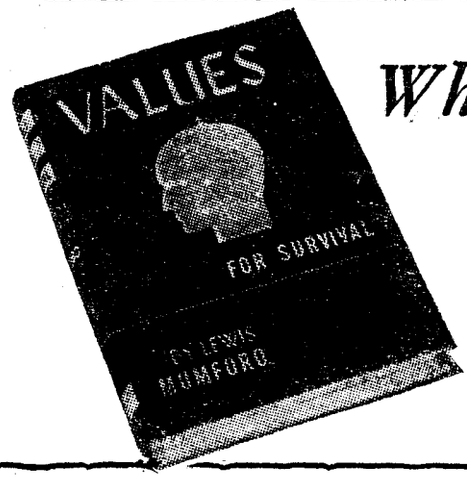

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point, he even blames himself and a few of his Emporia cronies for getting us into the Spanish-American War and the two world wars. For all this, he begs the forgiveness of his countrymen.

In the midst of the Kansas sunshine that pervades the rest of the book, this Oriental humility, this old man's purification of the flesh, have an eerie effect. White had his faults, God knows, but they were mostly the faults of place and time. If it had been otherwise, if he had not been so completely the child of his environment, he could never have exploited his personality in the way he did. If he had any fault that was peculiarly his own, it was the meagerness of his enthusiasms. His great spiritual adventure was the rededication he experienced when, as a young Republican publicist of increasing influence, he was allowed to touch the hem of Theodore Roosevelt's garment. As a young literary man, he looked to James Whitcomb Riley as other young writers, some of them even at that time and in that place, looked to Shelley or Tolstoy or Voltaire. White was always better by far than his enthusiasms, and apparently the unworthiness of them finally bore in upon him. The good cheer he soaked up and radiated all his life became in the end monotonous and oppressive. "Looking back over fifty years," he writes, in a context that lends irony and great ruefulness, "I can say that the gold standard is the only economic principle to which I have bitterly and consistently adhered." Too many of his other principles were of the same vintage and worth.

White lacked the critical powers of the best of his contemporaries, but he was surely their peer as a reporter, and he was better than the best of them in the succeeding generation. As reporting, reporting of the sort that captures mood and character as well as fact, his memoirs are fit company for any that have been written by Americans in this century or the last. He does very handsomely indeed by the worlds he knew—the world of the middle-class Middle West, the world of American journalism and the world of American politics at the business, or pre-balloting, level. He renders the first with sentiment in unexpectedly light doses, with a great deal of charm and unstrained humor. His chapters on his prairie boyhood are fine; conceivably, they could be excerpted to make as good a children's book as Lincoln Steffens' *Boy on Horseback*. His documentary account of his parents' direct-mail courtship—they went into specifications like prudent horse-traders or skeptical buyers of vacuum cleaners—should go right into the source books of frontier sociology. He devotes less space than one might have thought to the Emporia *Gazette;* this is probably because, even in the early days, he devoted less of his time to the paper than one might have thought. As a matter of fact, he seems more eager to talk about his work for *McClure's* and the *American* than about his adventures as a publisher, and his impressions of the *McClure's* group seem to me the most vivid we have had to date, when the reports must be very nearly all in. In what he does have to say about the *Gazette* one senses the intention to dispel some of the urban myths about small-town newspapering. Time and again he opens up the old ledgers to show that the *Gazette* could never have gotten along if he had not poured into it his earnings from the New York book and magazine publishers.

Good as they are, however, the sections on youth and journalism are of less interest than the sections on politics. White knew politics in Kansas and Washington for more than fifty years, and although when he died, two years ago this past January, he had not yet finished with his impressions of the Harding period, he had already written his reminiscences of thirty years and seven Presidents. It would be difficult to overstate the value of this material as history. There is probably nowhere in our literature a better account of the railroad politics of the eighties and nineties. A half-dozen party conventions of critical importance receive here the best coverage they have ever had. There are full and vivid portraits of Benjamin Harrison (this is perhaps the best of the lot), Cleveland, McKinley, Hanna, Roosevelt, Platt, Taft, Wilson, Harding and a dozen or so figures of cabinet and congressional rank. The portrait of Roosevelt is the longest—and the weakest; he has been done so often and so well by so many people who were not completely smitten, as White was, by his vigor and who had heard, as White had not, the same gospel from other and better sources. But the rest are superbly done, and in some cases, notably those of Harrison, McKinley and Platt, White's essays are more plausible, sensitive and convincing than anything the formal biographers have given us.

There is a rather special authenticity to White's political writing which to my mind distinguishes it from anything that we have had in this country. It does not flow from his intimacy with the people he writes about, for there have been other journalists, too many of them perhaps, who have gotten themselves mixed up in party politics; nor does it flow only from the fact that White had, in his way, a rather formidable literary consciousness, for there have been other journalists, though too few of these, who wrote as competently as he did. I think, however, that it is the combination of personal involvement and the real writer's dissatisfaction with flat surfaces that makes White's Presidents and his Sante Fe ward-heelers come so fully alive. His literary consciousness may not have been of the highest order (though Howells, Parrington and a good many other critics thought that his early novels held enormous promise), but at least he was fully the master of his own style, and he knew character, atmosphere and conflict when he saw them; the reality of his involvement is, of course, a matter of record. If White was not a man of the very highest sensitivity, he was at any rate the only artist of any sort who ever watched himself being burned in effigy by the Farmers' Alliance, the only poet who was on the receiving end of the Santa Fe gratuities that oiled the Kansas Republican machine for several decades, and the only novelist of his time who investigated village postmasters for the Republican National Committee. Other good writers, like Steffens and Adams, have watched others doing these things but only White, to my knowledge, has both done them and written about them. I imagine that students of American politics will be going to school to him for as long as his period holds any interest for them.

The last twenty years of White's life, the period he did not live to write about, have been summarized briefly and tastefully by his son W. L. White, who wisely did not attempt to finish the book but instead compiled quotations from representative and relevant editorials, letters and articles.

RICHARD H. ROVERE

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Soviet Drama and the War

Seven Soviet Plays. With an introduction by H. W. L. Dana. New York: The Macmillan Company. 520 pages. $4.

"SOCIALIST REALISM" has been fried often and to a turn in deep critical fat over the twelve years that separate the publication of *Six Soviet Plays*, edited in those days by Eugene Lyons, and the latest collection, *Seven Soviet Plays*, edited by H. W. L. Dana, but this phrase—God rest his name who invented it—is still the happiest to describe the literary fare that comes out of Soviet Russia. "Art is a weapon," quoted Elmer Rice in a prefatory note about the earlier plays; it is a whole arsenal of weapons in these later war plays, where it is used to blast the Nazi enemies of the socialist fatherland. In fact, the reader's senses are subjected more to the hubbub of war than to the gentle persuasiveness of artistic communication.

Russia is perhaps the most theatrical-minded country in the world, but she has never developed a native repertoire that could compare with her outstanding achievements in the staging and acting of plays. Since 1917, there has been an extraordinary amount of dramatic writing, for the Soviets regarded the theatre as an excellent educational, as well as artistic, medium, but very few of these plays have any claims on enduring art, however successfully the majority of them may have served the purpose of enlightening the people on socialist problems and victories.

Afinogenov is the only playwright whose work appears in both the collections, yet it is surprising how little difference time has made in the dramatic texture and characteristic appeal of Soviet drama. New themes of patriotism and war are treated with the same socialistic purposefulness as were themes of agricultural collectivization and industrialization in the plays of the First Five-Year Plan. It has been fashionable in American critical circles to condemn this element of sameness as the "propaganda motif"; after all these years it perhaps ought to be accepted now as a permanent factor in Soviet life and its reflection in literature as a natural manifestation of Soviet verisimilitude.

Two of the plays in this new collection, Solovyov's "Field Marshal Kutuzov" and Leonov's "The Orchards of Polovchansk," were produced several years before the Nazi invasion, but they breathe an awareness of the coming storm, as did so much of Soviet literature in those days of quiet preparation. "Field Marshal Kutuzov," a Stalin Prize-winner, is simply one of a spate of historical novels and dramas that rediscovered the glories of the Russian past in order to dignify and make beautiful the patriotism of the present.

The dry bones of history, however, are only sparsely covered with living flesh in Solovyov's play. Part of the reason perhaps is the essentially unheroic nature of the hero —Kutuzov. And the effort to overcome this failing by transforming the tired old general into a mighty opponent of his emperor lacks both conviction and historical reality. Tolstoy's memorable portrayal went as far as possible with Kutuzov, but in the end he still remained the personification of his own lethargic military axiom: When in doubt, do not act. Wooden figures of history too often crowd the peasant guerrillas off the stage, which robs the play of a good deal

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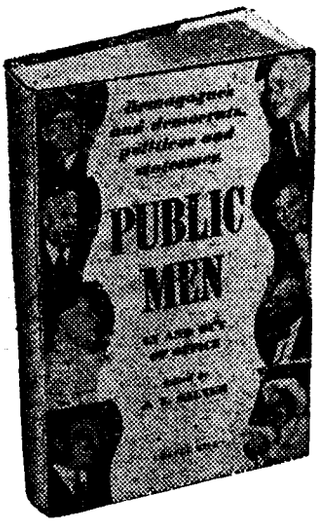

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of life. There is a suggestion of noble eloquence in a few of the set speeches of Kutuzov. This is only a charitable guess, for the blank verse of the translation is pedestrian in the extreme. In K. Trenev's recently published play, "The General," on much the same theme, some of the worst faults of "Field Marshal Kutuzov" are avoided.

"The Orchards of Polovchansk" contrasts strikingly with the early Soviet plays on the theme of agricultural collectivization, for now the battle has been won and the triumph of achievement is the dominant note. The seven children of the director of the apple *sovkhoz*, Maccaveyev (the transliteration of Russian names throughout the whole volume is execrable and inconsistent), have grown up under the Soviet system and are belligerently proud of their successful careers, ranging from doctor to boxer, and of the country that provided them with such opportunities. But "the Japs and the Germans are climbing, crawling, crawling nearer all the time," the father warns them (this in 1938), and each child automatically strikes a posture of defense. The central psychological situation—the return of their mother's former lover, an enemy of the state—is hopelessly muddled in an attempt to drench the play in ideological content.

The remaining five plays deal directly with the German invasion of Russia. In a sense, American audiences have sampled them all in the New York production of Simonov's "The Russian People," which is included in this volume. And it is perhaps the best in characterization and dialogue. The discipline and quiet soldierly qualities of old Vasin throw into plain relief the dashing heroics of Safonov; and in Valya there is much more than the stage dress and loose ornament of the heroism of Soviet women in war. She is believable because she is feminine, in and out of danger. The superior quality of the dialogue may owe something to the expert touch of a translator—Clifford Odets—who is also a playwright.

As a piece of sheer theatre, "Smoke of the Fatherland" of the Tur brothers and Leo Sheinin is a better play than Simonov's, though inferior to it in other respects. It provides thrilling action and enough humor to render the heroics palatable. When a stray shell releases a flock of jailbirds from their prison, one is amazed at the habit of Soviet discipline that compels them dutifully to report to the authorities for further orders. In "On the Eve," the late Afinogenov, the most distinguished of these dramatists, falls below the high level of the best of his previous plays, such as "Fear" and "Distant Point." Though the contrast is labored and lacks dramatic restraint, there is deep pathos in the picture of the happy Zavalov family suddenly engulfed in the tragedy of war. Yet, like all the good Soviet citizens in these plays, they do not so much regard it as a personal tragedy as the tragedy of the whole country and its collective achievements. And in the scorched-earth policy—an obvious theme for psychological treatment in several of the plays—it is the collective will to destroy for the good of all that triumphs over the natural human individual desire to preserve for selfish reasons.

This is the central conflict in Rokk's "Engineer Sergeyev," which dramatizes the blowing up of a great dam and its hydroelectric power plant (clearly suggested by the destruction of the famous Dneprostroy Dam) in the face of the advancing Nazis. Here the opposition to the official policy is provided by a traitor in the pay of the Germans.

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One is a little surprised at the prevalence of traitors and saboteurs in these war plays. Though an expected development in the circumstances, we had been led to believe that such defections were almost nonexistent. Yet not only these plays, but Soviet war literature in general, plainly reveal that this sort of treason was by no means exceptional. "Engineer Sergeyev" also presents the activities of the agents of the NKVD with uncommon fullness of detail.

Korneichuk's "The Front" caused a stir in 1942 when it enjoyed the distinction of appearing in *Pravda*. For the play was a forthright attack on outmoded older generals in the Red Army. Perhaps the attack caused such a stir because it took place in time of war, for hard-hitting criticism of the inefficiency and old-fashioned views of officialdom has become almost a convention in Soviet literature, and it usually coincides with sweeping changes ordered by the government. Such was the case at the time of Korneichuk's play, for many younger men were suddenly moved up to positions of high rank in the army after the disastrous setbacks of the summer of 1941 and the following winter. The persistence of the theme of criticism in "The Front" reduces it to a vigorous tract for the times, in which characters and action are sacrificed to bold thesis writing.

The chief faults in these Soviet dramas are unwittingly suggested in an interesting article on English and American plays in a recent issue of the Russian periodical, *Novy Mir*. The Soviet authors, V. Rubin and N. Karintsev, are plainly among our allies in this instance, and it comes as a pleasant surprise to hear the plays of such dramatists as Lillian Hellman, Sidney Kingsley and Maxwell Anderson justly evaluated in terms of their own, and not Soviet, artistic endeavors and dramatic climate. Rarely do these Russian writers fall back on the familiar Soviet critical jargon, as when they praise Kingsley for "taking part in the struggle on the ideological front" with his "The Patriots." What the Soviet critics admire most in our recent plays, however, is their "sharp dialogue and professional mastery." And these are precisely the qualities that are painfully and frequently absent in the plays under review.

Such defects have their compensation, however, for like nearly all Soviet war literature, these plays avoid complicating the simple, elemental emotions of war. Red Army soldiers and guerrillas know what they are fighting for, and hence there are no psychological adjustments to be made to the horrors of war. They hate war, and with their strong desire to live and return is coupled a longing that what they have loved will be there waiting for them, to caress into oblivion the ghastly image of bloody strife. Finally, again and again in these Soviet plays is expressed a note of hope for a brighter dawn when peace shall come. To be sure, it is a cautious hope, conditioned by ingrained distrust of both friend and foe. Heroes and heroines seem to know that from the crucible of war they will emerge, if they live, with a greater initiative, discipline and inner freedom. But they long for the time when they can remove the rifle from their shoulder. "I'm sure there won't be any more wars," declares Nina to Boris in "Engineer Sergeyev." "Do you mean to say that after such a war as this people will want another?" "It's hard to say," Boris replies;

ERNEST J. SIMMONS

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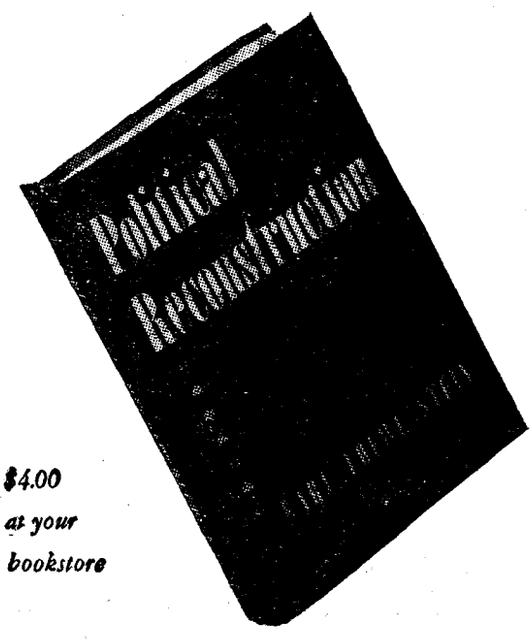

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War and Peace

Ivy Gripped the Steps, by Elizabeth Bowen. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 233 pages. $2.50.
Horizon Stories. Chosen by Cyril Connolly. New York: The Vanguard Press. 289 pages. $2.50.

THESE BOOKS contain thirty-two stories published in English magazines during the war. This is about all the two volumes have in common. Mr. Cyril Connolly gives the impression that in choosing the stories for his *Horizon* anthology, he decided to eliminate reference to what for five years the people of Britain endured. He has made one exception: he has included "In the Square"—the opening story of Elizabeth Bowen's *Ivy Gripped the Steps*, a collection composed exclusively of wartime stories—or, as their author aptly describes them, "studies of war-climate."

There's little doubt that *Ivy Gripped the Steps* is one of the most important contributions to "home-front" literature. It is the only work of fiction I've read that deals with the psychological states, or what Miss Bowen calls the "overcharged subconsciousness," of civilians in a besieged and bombarded country. Some of the stories are deceptive, occasionally obscure. Nor are they easy to review, for Miss Bowen has reviewed them herself in a preface from which one is tempted to quote at length. The reader should be warned, however, to avoid dipping into this preface until he has begun reading the stories and finds himself in trouble. If he doesn't, parts of it may strike him as a little too much on the defensive, even unnecessary. But since the remarks are clearly directed at American readers, I think they are justified; and for many, especially for those of us who did not live through a blackout and a blitz, these few pages will pour a light for the first time on the thoughts and behavior of Londoners whose lives were desiccated by war. "I do not think," Miss Bowen writes, "that the *desiccation*, by war, of our day-to-day lives can be enough stressed. The outside world war news was stupefying: headlines and broadcasts came down and down on us in hammerlike chops, with great impact but oddly little reverberation. The simple way to put it was: 'One cannot take things in.'" Illumination of such stupefying desiccation is beyond the power of the photographer and the journalist; it can be achieved only by the writing of a superior artist.

This preface, actually, is more than an attempt to describe aspects of war-climate which Miss Bowen may fear her fiction does not sufficiently emphasize: it serves as a key to the stories—to the dreams, fantasies and hallucinations produced in people by loss of sleep, loss of property, broken marriages, broken lives, endless days and nights of destruction impossible to imagine by those who have not experienced it. Without these introductory remarks, the reader would be more often at a loss to know just what relations the characters bear to one another; to what period in their lives, the author, at different times in a few pages, is referring; or whether, on the "rising tide of hallucination" created in such stories as "Green Holly," "The Demon Lover," "The Cheery Soul," it is the "ghosts" the characters see and hear, or their real selves who are meant to bear the substance of their actual identity. "The past," Miss Bowen explains, "discharges its load of feeling into the anesthetized and bewildered present." It is the "I" that is sought—and retrieved, at the cost of no little pain. And the ghosts—what part do they play? They are the certainties . . . hostile or not, they rally, they fill the vacuum for the uncertain "I."

Two underlying interests have always been evident in Miss Bowen's work—the Passage of Time and the Architecture of the House. For Miss Bowen, as for all those European writers who, as old as our century, have lived through two major wars and attained international recognition between them, the constant comparison of the painful past and the catastrophic present is inevitable. Architecture, the House, on the other hand, is an absorption peculiar to the best British writers of our time. They employ it as a symbol of the desire, possibly unconscious, to prolong a way of life, a stability, which since their childhood they have felt to be slowly but certainly falling apart. Destruction, therefore—not only in England, but all over Europe—has intensified the longing to cling all the more desperately, in fantasies by day, in strange prison-like dreams by night, to the Past; to treasure, under the stress of near-hysteria, the conventional behavior of so-called normal times; to recapture the vivid memories of childhood, of youthful passion, of moments of peace, of the serene silence of an English landscape in summer; but above all to snatch at any loved tangible remnant that can be rescued from the architectural ruin. "The search for indestructible landmarks in a destructible world," writes Miss Bowen, "led many down strange paths." It is down these paths that she has tried to follow her characters, and it is because they have led her into the chaotic world created by modern war, a world

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hitherto untraveled by the creative writer, that she has had to resort to a skeleton-like technique. Unfortunately—inevitably, perhaps—she does not always succeed. The efforts are occasionally so strained by the writer's insistence on economy, on her refusal to provide the essential clue, that the reader is left mystified. In "The Demon Lover," possibly the author's favorite, since she chose it as the title-story to the English edition (why do American publishers constantly alter titles?), a married woman with children pays a chance visit from the country to her unoccupied London home. On the hall table she finds a letter dated that day. She cannot imagine, and at the end one reader is still left guessing how the letter got there—since the house was locked, the caretaker away on vacation, and no one could possibly have been forewarned of her arrival. The letter is from a fiancé she had not heard of since he was "presumed killed" twenty-five years ago. Now, in the letter, he reminds her that "today is our anniversary . . . you may expect me at the hour arranged." She remembers, with growing horror, that the hour was to have been seven o'clock, but "*under no conditions* could she remember his face." Prompted by fear, she flees the house before the appointed hour. Outside, on the taxi-rank, she finds a single cab. "Without looking round, the driver started his engine," and as she opens the door "the clock struck seven." Leaning forward to give him the address, "driver and passenger . . . remain[ed] for an eternity eye to eye." Then the woman, having uttered her "first scream . . . continued to scream freely . . . as the taxi . . . made off with her into the hinterland of deserted streets." Bewitched, baffled and bewildered, the reader turns back to the preface, to learn simply that the fiancé—"the ruthless young soldier lover unheard of since 1916"—is one of the book's "questionable" ghosts.

On those occasions, however—in the complete short novel giving the American edition its title, in "Mysterious Kôr," in which a pair of lovers can find no place to sleep together in bomb-smashed London, and in "Songs My Father Sang Me," all of them stories whose situations do not demand so supreme a test as the clarification of "subconsciousness" desiccated by war—on such occasions Miss Bowen's writing is simple and superb. By far the most satisfactory story, I find, is "Sunday Afternoon." Here, in ten pages, by means of a conversation around a tea-table in Ireland, the mentality of each member of an upper-class family in the neutral country is illuminated with an artistry few living writers can equal.

To peer from Miss Bowen's blackout on to Mr. Connolly's horizon is like waking from a nightmare, to have it proved—by the spotless ceiling above the bed, the uncracked glass in the windows—that even if all is not well in the world, at least the sky is clear of death-dealing machines. Of a volume that has no organic whole, in a limited space it is only possible to record that in almost all these stories the standard of writing is unusually high, and to select from among them those that remain longest in the memory. It is ironic that the book opens with a story by a young English writer whose second book has just received castigation at the hands of some American critics. I don't know when Mr. Denton Welch wrote "When I Was Thirteen," an autobiographical account of a day's skiing in the Engadine, but it is certainly the best piece of

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prose he has published. In a few pages he has described, chiefly by implication, the extraordinarily subtle relationship between the adolescent and the near-adult male; and he has created in one old snow-hater a longing to breathe the sparkling air and climb the shimmering slopes of the Swiss Alps.

Of the dozen authors chosen by Mr. Connolly, few are known in this country; but there are several who deserve to be. Of these, two—Antonia White and Tom Hopkinson—stand out. Years ago Miss White caused a minor literary sensation in England with *Frost in May*, a first novel about life in a convent. Her story here, "A Moment of Truth," is a strange and remarkable achievement for a woman. It is a study of a married couple—a rather dull, long-suffering man and a madly neurotic wife—who "find for the first time in their life together . . . complete accord" only after she realizes he has desired her death and he has acknowledged this truth to himself. Tom Hopkinson's work, oddly enough, has something of the same quality. Both writers are preoccupied with aberrations of the mind. Hopkinson, however, gains his effects by a less strained, less impressionistic prose. Effortless and classic in style, it flows like a river over a smooth bed of sand. And, despite his insistence on realism, he manages to insert into everything he undertakes an element of fantasy, of the supernatural, describing both states in a manner so natural that what is manifestly abnormal human behavior you accept not only as normal, but inevitable. His "The Third Secretary's Story" is a story of romantic love that is reminiscent of and compares favorably with the best of Poe. In it are observations not often seen in print. When the Secretary, whose leisure hours for years have been spent having loveless affairs with women, finally falls in love with a doctor's wife, he discovers

> something which [he] had only partly understood before—that the act of love-making and the power which supports it is something less than half physical. . . . The deepest excitement of love is not something one experiences inside oneself at all. It is something one produces in another, and so experiences back from them.

This discovery happens to prove fatal, for after their one night together the doctor's wife disappears; his desire for other women goes with her, and he never sees her again. But that is only half of the Secretary's strange story. It is lit up, as are most of these stories, by flashes of poetry—a quality which helps to place Mr. Connolly's collection on a level higher than that of American anthologies. In too many American stories you can smell the print of the newspaper; you can detect one eye on the market, the magazine, the motion picture. All too often this attitude produces little factories of fact: topical accounts of action without atmosphere; journalism parading in fashionable fancy dress.

JAMES STERN

Albert Camus

WE WERE BORN at the beginning of the First World War. When we were adolescents, we had the depression. When we were twenty, Hitler came. Then we had the Ethiopian war; the Spanish war; Munich. This is what we got, in the way of an education. After which, we had the Second World War; the defeat; Hitler in our towns and homes. Born and brought up in such a world, what did we believe in? Nothing. Nothing but the stubborn negation into which we had been forced from the beginning. The world in which we had to live was an absurd world, and there was nothing else, no spare world in which we could take refuge. Confronted by Hitler's terror, what values did we have that could comfort us, and which we could oppose to his negation? None. Had the problem been that of the failure of a political ideology, or of a governmental system, it would have been simple enough. But what was happening came from man himself. We could not deny it. We saw it confirmed every day. We fought Hitlerism because it was unbearable. And now that Hitler has disappeared, we know a few things. The first is that the poison that was in Hitler has not been eliminated. It is still there, in all of us. Anyone who speaks of human life in terms of power, of efficiency, of "historical tasks," is like Hitler: he is a murderer. Because if all there is to the problem of man is a "historical task" of some kind, then man is nothing but the raw material of history, and anything can be done with him. There is another thing we know, and this is that we still cannot accept any optimistic view of human existence, no "happy end" of any kind. But if we believe that to be optimistic about human existence is madness, we also know that to be pessimistic about man's action among his fellow men is cowardly. We were against terror because terror is the situation where the only alternative is to kill or be killed, and communication among men becomes impossible. That is why we now reject any political ideology which raises global claims on human life.

Carey McWilliams

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Any such ideology spells terror and murder. And we want the Reign of Terror to come to an end.

In a bald and clumsy summary, this is what Albert Camus had to say when he was asked to lecture in New York on the subject of "The Crisis of Man." Those who heard him speak had no doubt that he had the right to say "we." His was the voice of a whole generation of Europeans, and more especially Frenchmen, who, caught in a struggle that was both senseless and inescapable, have done more than any accepted notion of duty or "historical task" could ever have required of them, with no other moral aid but the quality of their despair.

The world of action, to them, has not meant an escape from the world of thought, as it has to some of their elder brothers. But neither could they be satisfied with ideas whose connections with actual conduct would be only tangential and general. In fact, this is what they most objected to. They somehow considered the world of thought more dangerous than the world of action, and were suspicious of it. Because of this, they were often considered skeptical, or cynical, or "nihilistic." All of us have heard people report that the youth of France did not believe in anything, while the Fascists and the Nazis had a faith. This kind of talk was current in France itself, before the war. Few persons seemed to take into account the fact that those young men had plenty of reasons to wonder, and that their attitude also implied that thought could be more real than any action, once its authenticity became evident. They were looking for a kind of integrity of which the examples around them were only too rare. In fact, if they had to believe what was shown them on the historical scene, there appeared to be integrity only in evil. The world of Nietzsche was far more real than the world of science, rational thinking and humanistic moralism. Such being the case, the only sure guide could be loyalty to personal experience and the refusal to believe anything that could not be checked in terms of one's actual encounters with life. A kind of negative truthfulness. The best among those men knew that this was all they had with which to face armed brutality, death and dereliction. Those who came through must now continue their search in a world no less absurd than the one in which they were born.

There are several eminent writers in France today, but none who has taken up with more decision and clarity than Albert Camus the intellectual and moral implications, as well as the human pathos, of such a situation.

It is a situation that consists essentially of intellectual, moral and practical antinomies. The absurdity of life; despair; the impossibility of accepting general solutions; the evil in man—all these are questions, rather than answers. They would become meaningless the moment they were not faced with integrity. And it would not be too much to say that integrity is the outstanding quality of Camus' personality as an artist, a philosopher and a political journalist.

In *The Stranger*, the admirable short novel now published in English[1], Albert Camus has in fact expressed the tragedy of integrity as a modern man can sense it.

The story is simple. A man, Meursault, lets himself get involved in a sordid affair at the end of which he becomes

[1] The Stranger, by Albert Camus. Translated from the French by Stuart Gilbert. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 154 pages. $2.

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a murderer. He is brought to trial. At that moment, everything he has or has not done before the murder becomes a charge against him. He has let his mother die in a home for the aged; during the wake, he not only did not show any grief, but even smoked a cigarette; after the funeral he went to the movies and spent the night with a girl; he freely consented to become the accomplice of a pimp. During the questioning he expresses no regret; at the trial he remains completely impassive. His callousness, as the prosecutor remarks, is even more revolting than his crime. He is condemned to death.

It is the hero himself who tells the story. His is a peculiar kind of confession, meant for nobody in particular, just for the record. The objectivity, and even the anonymity, of the tone could not be greater. This man makes a point of stating only what is relevant to his case. In fact, in a world that condemns him on the basis of his objective behavior, he is the only objective person. In the routine attempt to save him, the defense substitutes for him a meaningless fiction. In order to have him condemned, the prosecutor retorts by a fiction in the opposite direction. All this is irrelevant. If somebody could say something relevant, explain what has happened, that would be important. But nobody seems to know, and everybody acts as if he knew why things happen to men. As for himself, he does not know either, and that is why he does not defend himself. His only advantage, if any, is that he knows that he does not know anything except the succession of events that was his life. This certainty he cannot betray. That is why he revolts so violently against the priest who comes to console him. Consolation would mean substituting something else for the bare truth. "It might look as if my hands were empty. Actually, I was sure of myself, far surer than he; sure of my own life and of the death that was coming. That, no doubt, was all I had; but at least that certainty was something I could get my teeth into—just as it had got its teeth into me."

Who is Meursault? "Just like everybody else; quite an ordinary person," is his answer. The only difference is that a certain series of events befell him, instead of a certain other. His lot could have been different, but not the final meaning of it. He was caught in a peculiar kind of trap. But this is precisely what describes the situation of the individual in everyday life. Since there is nothing else, there is no difference in meaning, either. "One life is as good as another." It is the self-evident that we have to deny, if we want to make of Meursault a sorry exception.

Meursault is Everyman, with a vengeance. For his actions he has only one explanation, which is very tentative: "Though I mightn't be so sure about what interested me, I was absolutely sure about what didn't interest me." A quite common predicament. Except that Meursault acknowledges it. Because what is right is not clear to him, he can do wrong; but to lie would be to confuse the issue. He cannot do it. The tension of the story consists entirely of the obstinacy with which this man refuses to lie. We feel this tension from the very beginning, and from the very beginning we expect doom. Rather than a virtue, truthfulness here is a radical decision, something like a last defense. That is why the story is tragic. It is the tragedy of the ethical. No book in contemporary literature points with such soberness and directness to what we still call "a man's soul," Macbeth's "eternal jewel." And this is why, among other things, although the tone of the narration might remind us of Hemingway or Caldwell, the parallel remains superficial. What Camus has attempted to describe is precisely what the Americans leave out: the dimension of the ethical, the "I."

In a world which is intrinsically absurd, what can man do? This is Camus' question. Meursault's answer is: die unreconciled. But life's own queries still remain to be answered. And nothing is so characteristic of Camus as his refusal to give answers that would be merely logical, to ignore the diversity and the contradictions of experience. The theme of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, a collection of philosophical essays, is the absurdity of the Absurd, the impossibility of making a logical rule out of it. Pessimism or optimism, God or suicide, Reason or Unreason, these are all attempts to jump out of the real problem by giving it a final solution. Camus calls them "refusals to acknowledge." In the same way, despair is the most intimate reality of man. To make of it a moral rule would be at the same time to debase it and to get rid of it. "Against eternal injustice, man must assert justice, and to protest against the universe of grief, he must create happiness," says Camus in his *Letters to a German Friend*, written in the thick of the battle and probably the noblest document of the state of mind of the European Resistance.

Albert Camus speaks of happiness against a background of despair, and that is why his voice rings true. Aware as he is of the absurd, he stresses nothing like clear consciousness. And from the ultimate loneliness of man, he draws

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one consequence, which is the necessity today of reëstablishing real communication among men, these "brother enemies" divided more than ever before by false thoughts and violence.

These are reasonable paradoxes. They are not so very different from the ones the Greeks had to face. And we cannot help feeling in Camus' voice a yearning for the return of a man who, however welcome in academic circles, has never since his death been readmitted to his proper place, which was the public place—Socrates, "the simple wise man with a curious distinction."

NICOLA CHIAROMONTE

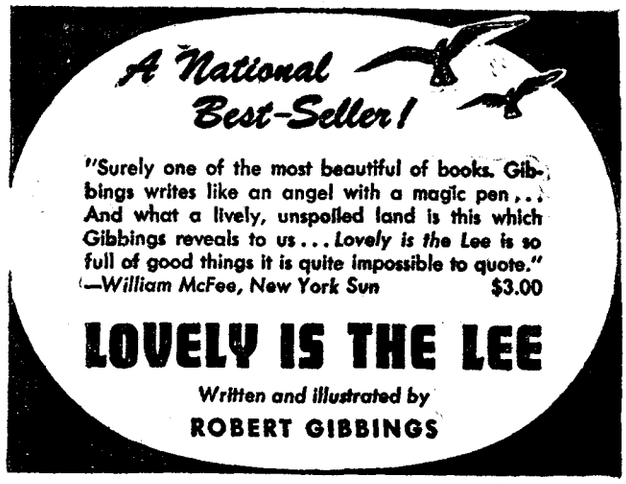
Double Standard

The Member of the Wedding, by Carson McCullers. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 195 pages. $2.50.
Delta Wedding, by Eudora Welty. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. 247 pages. $2.75.

SOUTHERN WRITERS have produced the nearest thing in America to a genuine, contemporary folk art. Other regions have their spokesmen, but only the South has stood still long enough for the best writers to catch up with it. The ingredients of a folk art are there, still undisturbed by the progressive industrialization of the country. The South has legend, history and tradition, a relatively primitive folk culture among the Negroes and poor whites, a bourgeois culture in the cities and the trappings of a decrepit but still pretentious agrarian aristocracy; all of which elements put the Southern writer in a position somewhat similar to that of the Russian novelists of the nineteenth century. It is no accident that the South has produced the leading regional writers.

Eudora Welty and Carson McCullers are surely among the finest of their generation of Southern writers. But it is curious to see how each in her own way makes what one might call an attempt to escape from the South. I don't mean arbitrarily to assign to Miss Welty and Miss McCullers the intention of achieving folk art, only to call the absence of a true folk quality in their writing an "escape." Each has her own distinctive aims as a writer, which it would be foolish to surrender to folk demands. I do, however, mean to point out that Miss Welty and Miss McCullers cannot utilize all the resources of their native regions; the reasons for this may have some bearing on American regionalism and folk literature in general.

My report on Eudora Welty's novel must begin with a confession of embarrassment, namely, that I was not able to get through more than a hundred pages. I found the going too dull; and since the most moderate demand one can make of writing is that it be interesting, I feel justified in having let Miss Welty's book go without further struggle. What I have to say applies, therefore, only to the first hundred pages, with the understanding that I may have missed some meaningful dramatic developments important to the evaluation of her novel as a whole. Moreover, there are kinds and degrees of dullness, some of which only very good writers can attain. Eudora Welty's writing is always imaginative and perceptive and miles above the generally prevailing level, even if, on a particular occasion, it does not happen to make an interesting novel.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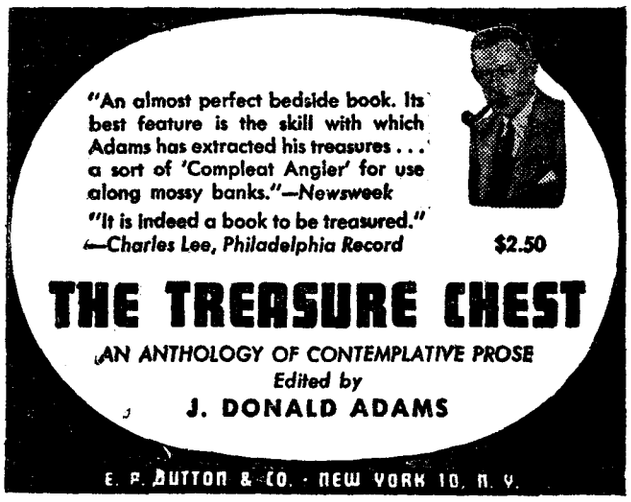
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In *The Wide Net*, Miss Welty's last collection of stories, she had reached an extreme point, beyond which, apparently, she found it impossible to go. There she had, as it were, forced an exchange of centers with the world, had evicted objectivity and moved into its place with an elaborate esthetic furniture. Though interesting and readable in a way that I have not found *Delta Wedding* to be, her last stories seemed withdrawn into a sort of fixed, interior esthetic contemplation, devoid of the life and color and preoccupation with Southern character that had marked her earlier work. *Delta Weddng* is in some ways a return to the earlier mood. It is a novel of Southern family life, full of characters with distinct personalities and idiosyncrasies: the children, the aunts, uncles, Negro servants, etc., of the Fairchild family, all of whom are drawn together in the preparations for the wedding of Dabney Fairchild. The action is placed objectively and is reported in a variety of ways—through direct narration, conversation and the points of view of the leading characters. *Delta Wedding* has, in short, the full structure of a novel, and its lack of interest is not due to faulty construction.

I think the dullness of Miss Welty's novel may be traced to the fact that though she draws upon social resources of custom and speech, it is not really a society that she is dealing with, but the sensations of one. The events occur discretely, as they would to someone who, though situated within this society, did not have any ongoing, extended relationship with it. Transitions are not keenly felt, and therefore the experience of connection, which is the essence of a society, does not enter the novel in the form of a clear, continuous, dramatic line. This also affects the emotions of the characters; the Fairchilds are presented each within his own separate sensibility, and are held together only in external relation by the overflow of the author's sensibility. The density of atmosphere and the many family details do not serve to establish a true family connection. It is as if Miss Welty had unlearned the lesson of Tolstoy, that the history of a society is the history of the innermost emotional interactions of its members.

Carson McCullers' novella, *The Member of the Wedding*, stands in more or less the same oblique relation to the South. It is the story of Frankie, or F. Jasmine Addams, in her thirteenth year, cut off from her girlhood friends and from the life around her. Frankie is a member of nothing and belongs to nothing; she is insanely bored. When her brother returns on furlough from Alaska to marry a local girl, Frankie gets the idea that he will invite her to accompany them on the honeymoon. This notion fills the great gap in her life, and the novella shows how she enlarges on her fancies, building them up out of nothing, until the inevitable disappointment. The interest here is more readily maintained than in Eudora Welty's novel; the dramatic line is stronger and more clearly drawn, the anticipation mounts in spite of some padding with which Miss McCullers has filled out her slender story, and there is an over-all irony and detachment that reinforces the emotional quality of the writing. But in relation to the South and to the folk material that is so liberally used, *The Member of the Wedding* is also oblique and self-centered. It presents not so much Southern life, as a parable on the life of the writer in the South, the alienation and withdrawal the sensitive Southerner must feel.

It is this aspect which these two books, otherwise dissimilar, have in common, and I think it is of some significance. In both novels, as in much of Southern writing, there is an unavowed double standard which divides the material used from the personal uses to which the author puts it. The subject matter, the color, the speech, the characters are all taken at first hand, from a deep social involvement; but the meanings that the author wishes to express are not so closely related to the Southern environment and share little more than its surface values. At the level of personal expression, the author withdraws, turns inward to the sensibility, as Eudora Welty does, or to the theme of alienation, as with Carson McCullers. Though both have taken a wedding as their theme of symbolic unification, it does not unite them with a folk or traditional society, as such a symbol might be expected to do, but serves rather to indicate their degree of withdrawal—which, in terms of the values involved, is solipsistic in relation to the South. It is an inevitable withdrawal, for the serious American writer cannot but be alienated from American society, close though he may be to it, and much though he may wish to belong. And it is this, I think, which is responsible for the fact that though we have regionalism in abundance, it will never attain its goal of folk art. This contradiction is all the more clearly seen in the South, where the folk material is richest and the folk appeal strongest. But the social contradictions of the South are also the greatest you will find in this country; and they are such that the whole society may be called the antithesis of art. I do not see how a serious Southern artist can really and truly feel at home in his home. ISAAC ROSENFELD

Neither Yogi Nor Commissar

And He Hid Himself: A Play in Four Acts, by Ignazio Silone. New York: Harper and Brothers. 126 pages. $2. Bread and Wine, by Ignazio Silone. (Originally published in 1937.) New York: Penguin Books. 328 pages. 25 cents.

IN A NOTE to this play Silone says that it was inspired by *Bread and Wine* but that it is not a dramatization of that novel. This is not the place to examine the differences between the play and the novel; it is sufficient to say that what was an excellent novel has become, at least in the reading, an indifferent play. This may be ascribed almost entirely to the fact that the schematic frame of "modern" drama to which Silone has adhered offers less scope for his talents than the more generous form of the novel.

Both play and novel deal with the return of Pietro Spina, an exiled revolutionary, to Italy in the days of the Ethiopian war. Disguised as a priest (which takes on more symbolic significance in the play than in the novel), he establishes contact with the underground. The plot turns largely on the attempted betrayal of the movement by a young student, Luigi Murica, and Murica's attempt to redeem this sin with his life. But even more than *Bread and Wine*, *And He Hid Himself* is a soundingboard for Silone's merging of Christianity and socialism. As he says in his preface, "The rediscovery of a Christian heritage in the revolution of our time remains the most important gain that has been made in these last years for the conscience of our generation." Like many other revolutionary

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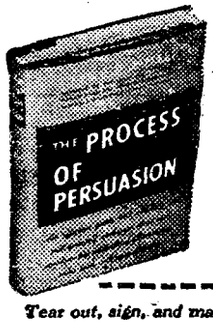

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intellectuals of the twenties and thirties, Silone has found orthodox Marxism unequal to the demands of the human spirit. But unlike most who have arrived at this position, he has not given up revolutionary politics. In fact he is an important leader of the Italian Socialist Party and in the final sentence of the preface to this new play he writes, "The tasks of the economic and political order are by no means obscured or dissimulated thereby; they are indeed the first and main tasks. But the men called on to carry them out must know that they come from far and are going far."

Silone's view of history is consequently a long one, and for all his ultimate optimism—inevitable for the Socialist and the Christian—it is a dim one. "In the sacred history of man on earth, it is still, alas, Good Friday." The Russian Revolution was a false Resurrection; if Silone's dissection of fascism is performed with polished hate, his vivisection of communism is accomplished with worried pity.

For all its shortcomings as drama, *And He Hid Himself* possesses much of the richness of his novels—a quality which derives primarily from the play of a radical intelligence and mother wit on folk experience. Edmund Wilson, in discussing this play of Silone together with André Malraux's latest novel, has written, "They stand almost alone in Europe as writers of first-rate talents who have continued to take imaginative literature with the utmost seriousness and who have not lost their hold on the large social developments that lie behind national conflicts." In spite of their very different backgrounds and temperaments, the coupling of Malraux and Silone is not artificial. There is a striking parallel between *And He Hid Himself* and Malraux's *Man's Fate* which illustrates how deeply rooted in everyday life and yet how "*antique*" is each writer's conception of tragedy. (Malraux: "The world of tragedy is always the ancient world.")

After Murica's death several of the characters are discussing it over the traditional bread and wine of the peasant funeral. His father has said that nine months are needed in the making of both bread and wine. An old relative comments, "The same as it takes to generate a man," and Murica's father responds, "And to unmake him, it takes so little." At the close of *Man's Fate*, after the death of Kyo Gisors, his father says to Kyo's widow, "You know the phrase: 'It takes nine months to make a man, and a single day to kill him.' We both know this as well as one can know it. . . . May, listen: it does not take nine months, it takes fifty years to make a man, fifty years of sacrifice, of will, of . . . of so many things! And when this man is complete, when there is nothing left in him of childhood, nor of adolescence, when he is really a man—he is good for nothing but to die."

Unlike too many writers of their generation and their movement, Malraux and Silone write as men who know "that they come from far and are going far," and the most powerful source of their enduring integrity is the sense that each has that "it is still, alas, Good Friday. Men who 'hunger and thirst after righteousness' are still derided, persecuted, put to death. The spirit of man is still forced to save itself in hiding."

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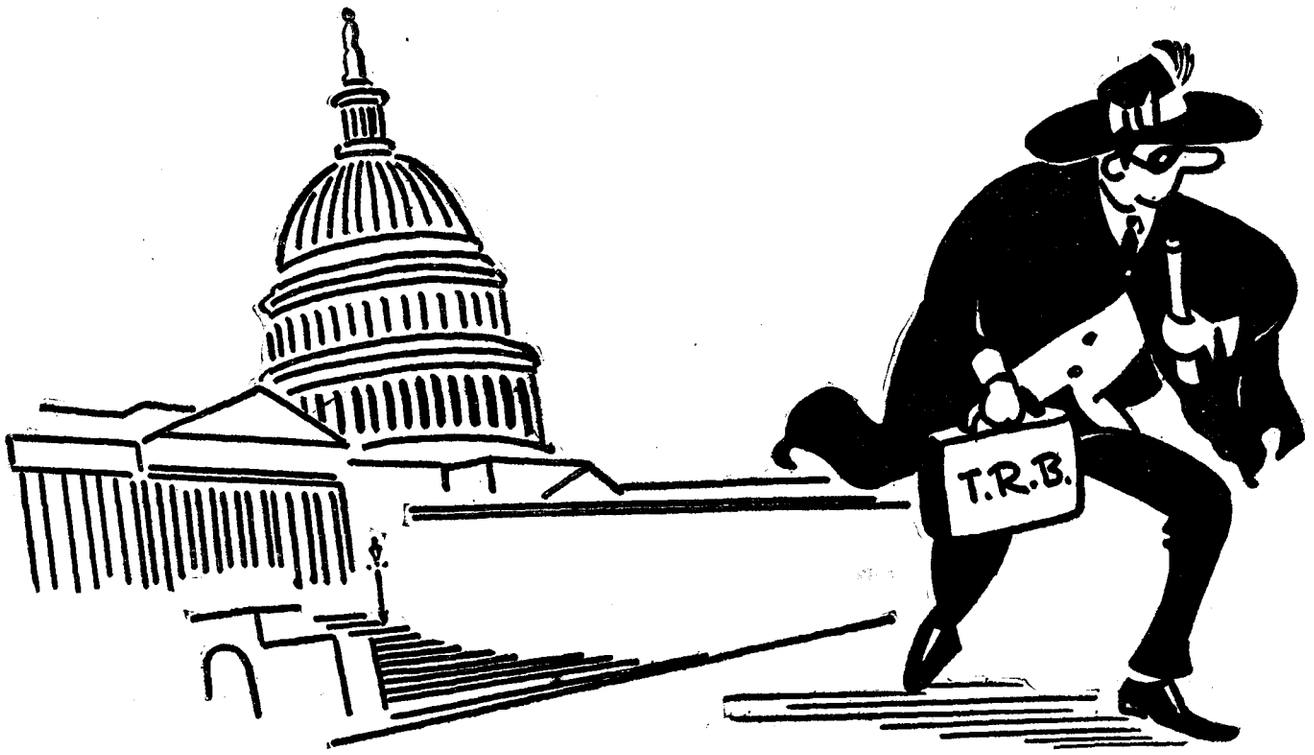

Who is T. R. B.?

For the past 23 years *New Republic* readers and many non-readers, particularly in Washington, have asked us who "T. R. B." is. His identity has been a well-kept secret. Several individuals have carried on the column, duplicating the style so successfully that very few readers have spotted the change.

The choice of the initials "T. R. B." was made during a ride on the old Brooklyn Rapid Transit subway, and—just between us and not to be repeated—"T. R. B." is Transit R. Brooklyn, one of the most popular journalists in America.

In all seriousness, the *New Republic's* "T. R. B." is even more widely quoted and followed by prominent people today than ever before. It is this kind of inside, informative material that makes the *New Republic* such vital, stimulating reading from week to week.

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New Republic News

This column is news. *Time* (there should be an asterisk here with a bright footnote) mentions it in the April 22 issue. Letters, talks by editor Bruce Bliven with liberals all over the West and telephone calls to Helen Fuller in Washington tell us that it's being read widely. Remarks range from, "I don't like it and don't give a damn about your elevator problems," to a careful, two-page letter from an elevator-signal expert telling us that we probably push the "down" button too late. After research we can tell this West Coast reader that his analysis is wrong. When the button is pushed, three or four numbers, or maybe none at all, light up on the indicator inside the elevators.

The *NR* editors and staff think of this column as a personal link with you. Your comments are appreciated. Let's have more of them.

• • •

Judging by circulation and letters, most *NR* readers like its new appearance. We are at our highest-in-history circulation point, and still climbing. To date we have had one subscription suspension—an old *NR* fan who decided to sit us out until the new material and features we told you about last week get into the magazine. It won't be long. We have a hunch that this reader might sneak around to the local newsstand in St. Petersburg, Florida, once in a while to see how we're doing. He'll find what he is looking for. Messrs. Schloss, Derso and Kelen, Miss Custer, Robert Osborn and our other contributors who say so much with their artists' pens and brushes will be there to greet him, too.

• • •

This week a reader sent us a disturbing note about her three-year-old son. One sunny morning she found him in the back yard, practising two-foot jumps from a low wall. Before each jump, and as he picked himself up, he shrieked a childish, falsetto war cry. It took our reader two jumps—two bumps—to make sense of his shouted words. They were, "Atom bomb! Atom bomb!"

• • •

William Carlos Williams is a practising physician in Rutherford, New Jersey. He is the author of several books of verse and two novels, *White Mule* and *In the Money*. His most recent book of poetry is *The Wedge*, published by the Cummington Press.

James T. Farrell's most recent book is *The League of Frightened Philistines*. He has just completed the first volume of a trilogy, *Bernard Clare*, which is to be published by Vanguard on May 13. Also to be published this spring, by New Directions, is a pamphlet, *The Fate of Writing in America*, which deals with the writer and the publishing business in present-day America.

D. S. Savage is a well known English critic and poet. He has contributed critical articles to *Kenyon Review*, *Sewanee Review*, *Briarcliff Quarterly* and other magazines. In 1938 he was awarded the Jeanette Sewell prize by *Poetry*, and in 1944 he published in London a widely read and controversial book of criticism, *The Personal Principle*. He writes, "I live in the country, write, and work on the land." Mr. Savage's verse has appeared in the *Nation*, *Partisan Review* and the *New Republic*.

Richard H. Rovere, formerly the managing editor of *Common Sense*, is now a staff writer for the *New Yorker*.

Nicola Chiaromonte, a political refugee from Italy, is now living in New York. He left Italy in 1934 and until 1941 lived in France, where he was connected with the Giustizia e Libertá group. He has contributed to *Partisan Review*, *Politics* and *View*.

James Stern is the author of two collections of short stories, *The Heartless Land* and *Something Wrong*. His work has appeared in *Harper's*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Esquire* and other magazines.

Ernest J. Simmons, now chairman of the Department of Slavic Languages at Cornell, is about to become a member of the staff of the New Russian Institute at Columbia, teaching Russian Literature, and executive officer of Columbia's Department of East European Languages.

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